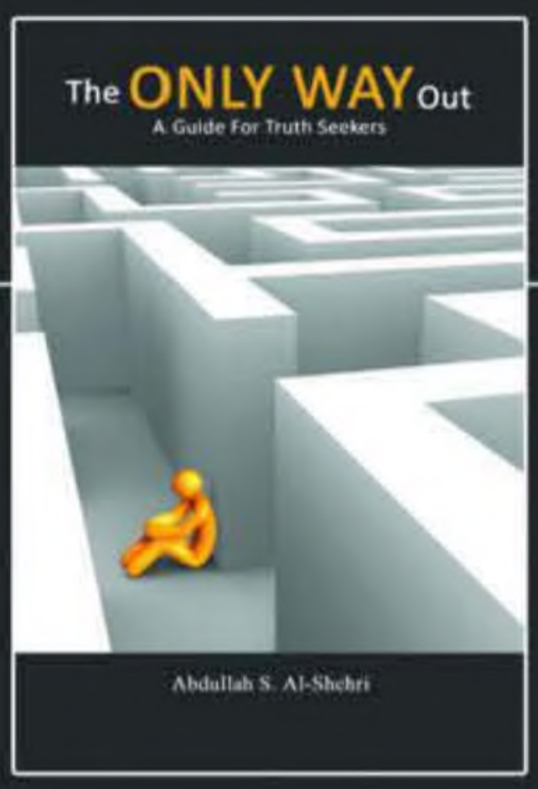

"The centrality of religion in the sphere of human existence cannot be overemphasized. It never dies away and systematic attempts to eradicate it from the lives of human beings have been abject failures."

"The deep meaning of life gushes from the eternal fountain of Tawheed. The One God who created lifeless matter is the same God who created life and death, birth and growth, love and mercy, and human existence is but one little chapter in the voluminous book of creation."

Abdullah S. Al-Shehri
The ONLY WAY Out
A Guide For Truth Seekers

Alamanah

Jubail Da'wah

The **ONLY WAY** Out

A Guide for Truth Seekers

Abdullah S. Al-Shehri

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THE ONLY WAY OUT 3

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"…early man probably pondered similar thoughts and came to the conclusion that an intelligent power created everything, or – as someone today might express it, organized energy into material form. What that "intelligent power" actually is has varied and been debated down through the ages, forming a rather long list of possibilities".

(Guthrie, G. D. (1997) *The Wisdom Tree*)

"…but I finally understand that the universe refuses to cooperate with my desire to play God".

(Wheately, M. (2006) *Leadership & the New Science*)

CONFUSION AND DEVIATION

Man: The Inquisitive Creature

> "What we call visible nature or this world must be but a veil and surface-show whose full meaning resides in a supplementary unseen or other world".
>
> (William James)[1]

Man never gives up the habit of posing critical questions about himself and life. Because man is endowed with a unique faculty of reasoning that is exclusively characteristic of him, it stands to reason that man has a legitimate right in posing such questions.

Astonishingly, this involuntary and irresistible habit to question things has treated all people on an equal basis, because all various parties develop a natural tendency to put forward the same basic, but significant, questions. Most - if not all - of us seem to arrive at the same cul-de-sac when it comes to answering questions about life such as: why am I here? And, what will happen to me after death?

Through the ages, these questions have been asked by great philosophers, scientists, thinkers, and at the same time, simple villagers, uneducated people and children alike. These are the kind of questions which force parents to evade answering their child's curiosity by saying, "It's a good idea not to ask these questions my dear", or just stand there perplexed and open-mouthed.

Although, it is true that man has instituted vast and complex organizations to administer his affairs and seems to have reached the pinnacle of material progress, he fails to fathom the mystery of existence, the mystery of infinity and

---

[1] James, Williams (1895) Is Life Worth Living? *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Oct.), p. 10.

eternity, the mystery of birth and death[1]. This situation has encouraged man to adopt different approaches towards comprehending reality; approaches that involved various schools of study and research ranging from the science of philosophy, with all its ramifications, to that of natural science and natural theology. Brian Greene, a contemporary scientist, assesses the true value of all scientific undertakings achieved so far by saying:

"Progress in physics, such as understanding the number of space dimensions; or progress in neuropsychology, such as understanding all the organizational structures in the brain; or, for that matter, progress in any number of other scientific undertakings may fill in important details**, but their impact on our evaluation of life and reality would be minimal**. Surely, reality is what we think it is; reality is revealed to us by our experiences"[2].

Before Greene, Erwin Schrodinger, the German physicist and Nobel Prize winner, wrote with dismay:

"The scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient…It [science[cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, **but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously**"[3].

Out of this frustration came a dire need to question the validity of man‘s approaches towards understanding reality. Would it be reasonable to continue pursuing the answer

---

[1] Ahmad, Khurshid (1988) *Islam: its Meaning and Message*, edited by Khurshid Ahmad, United Kingdom, p. 11-12.

[2] Greene is stressing the problem of having to rely on our subjective experiences, where reality is most likely distorted and incomplete (Greene, B. (2004) *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, Vintage Books, p. 4-5).

[3] Schrodinger, Erwin (2001) Why Not Talk Physics? In Wilber, Ken (Ed.) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, p.83, Shambhala, Boston & London.

through materialistic methods in order to unravel mysteries of a metaphysical nature? Questions like these have revived human interest in practices once discredited as mythical, superstitious, and out-dated, practices such as magic, pseudo-spiritualism, mysticism, voodoo-like rituality, and occult religiosity. These too only worsened the human predicament and turned life into an illusion, unworthy of any appreciation.

Regrettably, the problem at hand appears to be a cyclic one[1]. When man reaches the climax of his efforts to identify his state of being, there is the possibility of getting entangled in the fallacies of another man-made conceptualization or being veered off by the miscalculations of human conjecture. **Is there a way out? Will there be a time when man begins to acquire a strong distaste for his pompous theorizations and come to realize the misleading aftermaths of human speculation?**

At this critical stage, religion has a word to say. But before we listen to it, let us pose these starter questions to guide our discussion:

What is religion? Is it a man-made conception? If not, then in what way can it answer our questions and dismiss our longstanding uncertainties?

---

[1] The great philosophers of antiquity such as Socrates, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, and their successors were more efficient generating questions than giving satisfactory answers. Their intellectual legacy, although rich and diverse, remains the source of many unresolved problems.

The Position of Religion

> "Every serious and reflective person realizes, I think, that the religious element in his nature must be recognized and cultivated if all the powers of the human soul are to act together in perfect balance and harmony".
>
> (Max Planck)[1]

If we are to consider the enormous number of cults and beliefs prevalent in different parts of the world, it would be extremely difficult to give a clear-cut, exhaustive definition of the term ~~"re~~ligion". Nevertheless, we still need to know what religion is, or at least form a basic understanding of it in our minds.

According to James Barham:

"Religion is many things, but if there is one characteristic that all religions have in common, *surely it is faith*. What is faith? This itself is a highly disputed matter, but perhaps we may define it as a strong emotional attachment to an all-encompassing worldview that outstrips the available empirical evidence"[2].

Human beings cannot help associating themselves with some kind of holistic worldview, some kind of deep-seated belief which they inescapably feel worthy of veneration and admiration. In practice, this faith may exist in the name of a dogma, an ideology, a philosophy, a principle, a system, a

---

[1] Planck, Max (2001) The Mystery of Being. In Wilber, Ken (Ed.) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, p.161, Shambhala, Boston & London.

[2] Barham, James (2004) Why Am I Not A Darwinist. In *Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing*, Edited by William A. Dembski (ed.), Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

doctrine, and so on[1]. This faith or belief eventually becomes an irreducible representation of our ~~"re~~ligion": the inner conviction that determines our attitudes, orientates our spirituality, and engenders the sense of purposefulness in our relationship with existence as a whole. Dr. Zakir Naik, an expert in comparative religion, rightly remarked that ideologies and man-made systems are - in the deepest sense of the word 'religion'- only belief systems competing to assume the role of religion, but on their own terms. Naik wrote:

"Marxism, Freudianism and other 'non-religious' beliefs tried to attack the roots of organized religions. But these, in turn, developed into belief systems themselves. For instance, when communism was adopted by many countries of the world it was preached with the same commitment and fervor that characterizes the act of preaching and propagation of religions"[2].

This may justify why the Islamic definition of religion is of particular interest. The Arabic term *'Deen'* is used to mean religion, but in a much broader sense. In Islam, Deen means one's way of life, and the reality around which someone's life revolves is called an *Ilaah* or a god. As Paul Tillich, the German Lutheran theologian, once noted, religion – in the widest sense - is "whatever concerns a person or a people most. This can, of course, be the Living God, but equally it can be nationalism or financial success"[3]. So if the reality around which someone's life revolves is a celebrity then his god is a celebrity, if it is science then science is the god, and if

---

[1] No one can claim that he or she can live without a belief. Even an irreligious person has a belief of his own: he or she "believes" that there is no such thing as religion.

[2] Naik, Zakir (2007) *The Concept of God in Major Religions*. Darrusalam Publications, p. 6.

[3] Smith, Huston (1990) Postmodernism's Impact on the Study of Religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 58, No. 4, (Winter), p. 659, Oxford University Press.

it is gambling at the casino then that person's religion (way of life) or god (most important reality) is gambling at the casino. In this regard, William C. Chittick has something to say:

"The gods in a world of *takthir*]In Arabic: plurality, multitude, and diversity[are legion. To mention some of the more important ones would be to list the defining myths and ideologies of our times – freedom, equality, evolution, progress, science, medicine, nationalism, socialism, democracy, Marxism. But perhaps the most dangerous of the gods are those that are the most difficult to recognize"[(1)].

[(1)] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 14.

Religion: an Integral Human Experience

The following anecdote - widely circulated among scientists familiar with the Bateson's history - interestingly manifests an ineradicable intimacy with religious experience. Although Gregory Bateson's parents were steeped in atheism, the father would regularly read the Bible to his family after breakfast, so that, the father urged, they would ~~n~~ot grow up to be *empty-headed* atheists" [(1)].

The centrality of religion in the sphere of human existence cannot be overemphasized. It never dies away and systematic attempts to eradicate it from the lives of human beings have been abject failures. Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche may provide good examples. To Marx, religion was 'the opium of the people'. To Nietzsche, God was dead. Both of them swam against the tide. They both died and became history; religion outlived them and continues to live. Freud and many other positivists believed that religion represented an immaturity which science can overcome[(2)]. It was only the passage of time that proved the downright falsity of such a claim. Ken Wilber, regarded by some as one of the most important thinkers of our century, explains:

"Sociologists have long predicted that modernity would simply sweep away all religious factions, since the latter are supposedly based on nothing but pre-modern and primitive superstition. And yet the modern world is still chock-a-block with various religious movements that simply refuse to go away"[(3)].

Karen Armstrong, the renowned writer on comparative religion, has also observed that

---

(1) Noel, C. (2008) *Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty, and the Sacred Earth*, State University of New York Press, p. 13.
(2) Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 444.
(3) Wilber, Ken (2000) *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Gateway, p. 133.

"Even though so many people are antagonistic to faith, the world is currently experiencing a religious revival. Contrary to the confident secularist predictions of the mid twentieth century, religion is not going to disappear"[(1)].

Today, Darwinian neuroscientists and philosophers[(2)] maintain that mind, consciousness, and the self are only by-products of the brain's electrical and chemical processes and that Religious/Spiritual/Mystical Experiences (RSMEs) are only brain states or delusions[(3)] created by neural activity[(4)].

"Accordingly these scientists and philosophers believe that there is no spiritual source for RSMEs; that is, they think that the human brain creates these experiences and, in so doing, creates God"[(5)], relates Mario Beauregard, a neuroscientist who researched the neurobiology of RSMEs in his groundbreaking work *The Spiritual Brian*.

Beauregard and his colleague Denyse O'Leare analyzed these claims in the light of neurobiological evidence and came to the conclusion that "the transcendental impulse to connect with God and the spiritual world represents one of the most basic and powerful forces in *Homo sapiens*" and "for that reason, RSMEs point to a fundamental dimension of human existence". RSMEs "are at the heart of the world's great religions" and "are commonly reported across all cultures"[(6)].

---

(1) Armstrong, Karen (2009) *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means*, Bodley Head, p. 9.

(2) Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Steven Pinker, Michael Shermer, Paul Kurtz, to name a few.

(3) Richard Dawkins authored *The God Delusion*.

(4) It is worth noting that Daniel C. Dennett, although a staunch evolutionary atheist and a strong proponent of naturalism, has stated that human "reasons are not physical conditions of the world" (Dennett, D. (1984) *Elbow Room: the Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*, Clarendon Press, London, p. 27).

(5) Beauregard, Mario & O'leary, Denyse (2007) *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul,* HarperCollins, p. 289.

(6) *Ibid*: p. 290. Some religious truths are not amenable to refutation by means of 'Transcendental Criteria', that is refuting religious truths

Religion not only represents a deep psychological need but, as William Hocking from Harvard University emphasizes, also has "some definite and indispensable social function to perform" in spite of the fact that "there is no united voice as to what that function is"[(1)].

Emile Durkheim, in his masterpiece *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, and despite his wavering agnosticism, effectively showed the functional indispensability of religion to society[(2)]. Above all, Durkheim's sociological observations persuaded him that there was something "eternal in religion" which was destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought had successively enveloped itself[(3)].

Even Darwin - contrary to Dawkins' pretentious claim that with "a good dose of science"[(4)] atheists can still lead a happy and guiltless life - expressed how painful it was to turn one's

---

through a set of axioms and statements upon which such truths are not based. Just to give you an example, this would be like measuring the circumference of a circle using a ruler! In situations where 'Transcendental Criteria' are inapplicable, one may only rely on experience and judge the validity of religious truths by means of 'Immanent Criteria'. Here, the referee (which could be me or you) is not a basketball referee doing the business of a football referee. There are times where in order to understand what religion really is (or, in Max Weber's term, attain *Verstehen*), one has to 'live' religion and not only 'think' about it.

(1) Hocking, W. E. (1923) Illicit Naturalizing of Religion, *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (Nov.), p. 566; University of Chicago Press.

(2) See Keenan, William (2002) Post-Secular Sociology: Effusions of Religion in Late Modern Settings*, European Journal of Social Theory*, 5; p. 280.

(3) Durkheim, E. (1915) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J.W. Swain. London: Allen & Unwin.

(4) Dawkins, R. (2006) *The God Delusion*, p.404-405. In his *What is Life*, Erwin Schrödinger persuasively argues that science on its own offers nothing interesting about the deep meaning of life. Dawkin's *delightful dose of science* is for Schrödinger, who, I must admit, is intellectually mightier than Dawkins, painfully silent towards the big questions of life (Schrödinger, E. (1992) *What is Life*? Cambridge University Press, p.138).

back on faith. In a letter he sent to J. D. Hooker on 17, June 1868, Darwin nostalgically wrote:

"I am glad you were at the Messiah: it is the one thing that I should like to hear again, but I daresay I should find my soul too dried up to appreciate it, as in old days; and then I should feel very flat, for it is a horrid bore to feel, as I constantly do, that I am a withered leaf for every subject except science. It sometimes makes me hate science"[(1)].

Many atheistic evolutionists insist that religion is an evolutionary product and therefore, one may justifiably conclude, just as *natural* (and legitimate) an evolutionary entity as human beings themselves. In some occasions, such evolutionists would emphasize that religion has, pragmatically speaking, evolved to fulfil key social needs and, consequently, has heavily determined the formation of history (for example, the role of Protestantism in creating capitalism or the role of Islam in liberating the Arabs from ignorance and drawing their attention to the importance of thinking and discovery) .

But such evolutionists contradict themselves when they equally depict religion as an aberration, an abnormality, a harmful redundancy, a detrimental epiphenomenon that has to be eradicated, stifled, or at least pushed to the furthest margins of human life. This is like asserting that carnivores have *naturally* evolved but must be exterminated for their being predators (i.e. killing other organisms and feeding on them) despite the catastrophic repercussions their extinction would bring upon wildlife's ecosystem. The more striking contradiction is their claim that present-day myths and superstitions *are natural* concomitants of modern man's evolving consciousness yet they miserably fail to explain why myth and superstition should then be treated as *unnatural*[(2)].

---

(1) *Selected Letters of Charles Darwin: 1860-1870*, edited by Frederick Burkhardt, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 198.

(2) Dawkins and his advocates fear naturalistic (adaptationist) explanations of religion because, by seeking a natural basis for religion,

The incoherency in such materialistic arguments may partially account for evolutionary anthropologists' tendency to speak of 'monotheism' as an advanced myth or, as some would like to conjecture, one of the greatest achievements of latter-day higher religions!

---

adaptationists only legitimatize religion's case and justify its very existence. Dawkins' worry, as it appears, is that believers are continually supplied with ammunitions of scientific arguments for God's existence and religious experience. Adaptationists, to give readers a clue of the threat they pose to Dawkins' views, "concentrate on the benefits provided by religion, such as increased social cohesion and the individual benefits that stem from it, such as better physical and mental health and greater longevity" (Sanderson: 2008, p. 141). Enumerating such 'blessings' of religion is almost tantamount to saying, "despite the distinctive and apparently extraordinary properties of religion…religion is, in some ways, quite natural (Barrett: 2000, p.29, 33), so it's quite natural to be religious". When religion is treated and sanctified as natural, Dawkins' case becomes the more difficult and unnatural. In order not sound discordant, Dawkins applies a different tactic, that of depicting religion as an error of nature, a virus of the mind, and immaturity, to say the least! (See Barrett, Justin L (2000) Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* ; Vol. 4, No. 1; Sanderson, S. K. (2008) Adaptation, Evolution, and Religion, *Religion*, 38: 141-156).

A Working Classification of World Religions

In the forthcoming pages, the reader will be introduced to two forms of religion: Conventional Religion and True Religion. As you can see, this classification is not value-free because it deliberately marks one form of religion as false (Conventional Religion) and another as genuine (True Religion). We will expound on this classification when we reach it, but for now it might be helpful to adopt a value-free classification of major world religions into two categories. The first category includes what can be called 'prophetic religions' while the second embraces what are sometimes known as 'non-prophetic religions'[(1)]. The former primarily refers to the three major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sometimes these three are called the three 'monotheistic religions' or the 'Abrahamic religions'. They are called 'prophetic' because they believe in a divine guidance revealed to their Prophets.

The second category includes all the other major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. Although the latter are considered non-prophetic, there is the unsubstantiated claim that Zoroastrianism has a Divine origin. Sikhism is a branch of Hinduism and the nature of the latter is very confusing, to the extent that A.S. Woodburne was compelled to write:

"Polytheism, henotheism, pantheism, and monotheism are all to be found within Hinduism, so that a thoroughgoing treatment of Hindu theology from the historical viewpoint would be a task for a corps of scholars who could devote years to the study"[(2)].

[(1)] Naik, Zakir (2007) *The Concept of God in Major Religions*. Darrusalam Publications, p. 9.

[(2)] Woodburne, A. S. (1925) The Idea of God in Hinduism, *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January, p. 52, University of Chicago Press.

Like Hinduism, the origins of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism can easily be brought into question; so is the reliability of the method by which their scriptures have been documented and subsequently transmitted. The vast majority of believers in non-prophetic religions acknowledge the fact that their scriptures, although held sacred, are not authentic divine revelations, but rather the collections, writings, meditations, compilations, and sayings of revered - sometimes anonymous - men, passed down from one generation to another. As Professor John Blackie notes:

"Chronology and accurate history are well known to be the weak points of the Hindu literature: so we must not expect to start with any very well marked and formally authenticated memoirs of the great reformer of the Brahmanic religion(s)"[(1)]

A common feature among all non-prophetic religions is that they incorporate various levels of polytheism and henotheism[(2)]. Hinduism for example "contains nature worship, ancestor worship, animal worship, idol worship, demon worship, symbol worship, self-worship, and the highest god worship"[(3)]. The religion of the ancient Greeks, a religion of many gods and goddesses, would fit well into this category.

A fact which may come as a surprise to many is the discovery of pagan imprints on the complexion of Christianity. A number of prominent historians and anthropologists, whose names and quotations will be cited shortly, maintain that early Christianity, although originally monotheistic, later on

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(1) Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, 1878, p. 111.

(2) *Polytheism* is the worship of many gods while *henotheism* is the worship of one God while believing in the existence of other gods (Bowker, John (1997) *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford University Press, p. 696).

(3) Theertha, Swami D. (1992) *History of Hindu Imperialism*, Madras, p. 178.

assimilated and retained many forms and symbols of paganism, most conspicuously the Trinitarian Godhead[1].

The well-known Italian historian of religion, Raffaele Pettazzoni, meticulously treated the Trinity problem in his study *The Pagan Origins of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity*. Pettazzoni first points out that "the existence of representations of a tricephalous (triple-headed) god from one end to the other of barbarian Europe is of importance in relation to the genesis of the three-headed image of the Christian Trinity"[2]. On the evidence available, Pettazzoni believed that there was "a positive contribution to the genetic problem of the three-headed type of the Christian Trinity, as having a pagan origin"[3]. He further asserted:

"This theory was strengthened by the discovery of a number of iconographic representations of the Gallic tricephalous (triple-headed) god on Gallo Roman Monuments"[4].

Another scholar is Professor Timothy E. Gregory from Ohio University. A specialist in Byzantine history and classical archaeology, Gregory brings to our knowledge archaeological evidence confirming the survival of Greek paganism into early Christianity. He contends that in the light of available evidence "it seems rash to dismiss the likelihood that some aspects of paganism would survive into Greek Christianity"[5]. Evidence includes the conversion of pagan temples into churches, the proximity of many early Christian

---

[1] In contrast to Trinitarians, there are the Unitarians who reject the divinity of Jesus and believe in the oneness of God.

[2] Pettazzoni, Raffaele (1946) The Pagan Origins of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 9, (edit.), p.136.

[3] *Ibid*: p.149.

[4] *Ibid*: p. 149.

[5] Gregory, Timothy E. (1986) The Survival of Paganism in Christian Greece: A Critical Essay. *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 107, No. 2, (Summer), p 235-236.

basilicas to important pagan sanctuaries, Christian tombstones showing converts who retained their pagan names, and most importantly religious forms within paganism and Christianity that are remarkably parallel[1].

"Indeed", says Gregory "we should be very surprised if such were not the case in any situation where one religion replaced another…There are, then, many reasons to expect the survival of paganism well into the Byzantine period. What is more difficult to understand is the means by which elements of paganism made their way into Christian practice and belief"[2].

Enthusiastic to win the hearts and minds of more pagan converts, Christian authorities were prepared to make expensive concessions, as Gregory concludes:

"Christianity came to accommodate points of view that were fully acceptable to the sentiments of those who had previously been pagans"[3].

Finally, I quote Joseph P. Widney whose summary of the subject at hand is of prime significance:

"The Latin Church of the West, fostered under the moulding influence of the native polytheisms, developed, of all, the widest divergence from the primitive monotheism of the Old Testament, and from the simple teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Here, the One God of Abraham became not One, not Three, even, but many. With Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Virgin, and adoration of innumerable Saints, practically a theogony was built up rivalling that of the plains of the Ganges".[4]

Judaism is no exception. Like Christianity, Judaism claims a strong identification with monotheism. This indeed was the case before these two underwent direct and indirect

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(1) *Ibid*: p. 235-36, 239.
(2) *Ibid*: p. 230, 236.
(3) *Ibid*: p. 242.
(4) Widney, J. P. (1932) *The Genesis and Evolution of Islam and Judeo-Christianity*, Pacific Publishing Company, Los Angeles, California, p. 213-214.

adulteration. In the forthcoming pages the reader will be introduced to what has come to be known as conventional religion. Conventional religion may be the invention of the people, a distorted or misinterpreted version of true religion, or an alloy of both. As we'll see, there is strong evidence that Judaism is a religion that is pregnant with many of the symptoms characteristic of conventional religion.

In addition to containing flagrant anthropomorphic depictions of God, early Judaism incorporated various pagan symbols. I will refer to one study supporting this conclusion. Dr. Jacob Neusner is a research associate in Jewish History at Philip W. Lown Institute of advanced Judaic studies at Brandies University. Drawing on many religious and historical sources, Dr. Neusner published a study (1963), wherein he maintained that "a century after the fall of Jerusalem (after 70 C.E.), pagan symbols of various kinds were apparently widespread in Jewish public buildings and graves". In that era, "Jewish use of formerly ignored pagan symbols was generally characteristic of all of Judaism", notes Dr. Neusner who wonders "why some Jews apparently began to use symbols of mystical significance borrowed from entirely pagan sources, and how such usage was congruent with the policies of the tannaim[1]". Dr. Neusner then concludes:

"We are faced, therefore, with the problem of explaining why the corpus of pagan symbols, most of which were related in some way to the salvation of man and his achievement of unity with the Godhead, was appropriated by Jews for Jewish religious purposes"[2].

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[1] Tannaim refers to the rabbinic sages of Mishnah period. Mishnah, in turn, is the codification of Jewish oral law.

[2] Neusner, Jacob (1963) Jewish Use of Pagan Symbols after 70 C.E., *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 43, No.4, (Oct.), p. 278, 288, 289, 293. Published by The University of Chicago Press.

Man-Made Religions

At this point, the sceptical may call the validity of religion into question and ask, —Why do the answers which religion provide appear unsatisfactory? Why is there too much bickering among religious factions? Why is religion incapable of coming to terms with science (pejoratively "scientism")? And why is it sometimes reality-resistant?

Questions like these certainly ascribe an indelible passivity to religion and religious attitude. Admittedly, those bombarded by such questions have ample evidence to support their case. Religion has indeed, at different historical intervals, been the source of many plights. Oppressive wars were waged in the name of religion; religious chauvinism, brutal inquisitions, persecution of scientists, and conflict with reason, facts, and sometimes common sense count among the atrocities that have incurred the displeasure of many people. **But, and this is very important, which religion are we talking about here? Are we referring to a particular religion or religion in all its forms and manifestations?**

Here rises the need to draw the line between two kinds of religion: *Conventional Religion* and *True Religion***.** By contrasting these two, the reader may have correctly jumped to the conclusion that conventional religion – not true religion – is our enemy. In this regard, John E. Boodin wrote:

"Conventional religion has often joined in conspiracy with men's passions, reinforcing their blindness by somnolent acquiescence or misdirected devotion, following the flag of man's selfish lust for power. But for *true religion* no ideal short of humanity can suffice. Its cause must be the common good of man. Its loyalty is limited by no national or race boundaries. For there can be no true loyalty to a nation which is not at the same time loyal to humanity. We can worship no

national god. Spiritually and materially our destiny is interlinked"[1].

We can expound on Boodin's informative differentiation to gain a further understanding of the character of conventional religion. Conventional religion can be the invention of culture and local tradition, a distorted version/interpretation/application of true religion, or an alloy of both. In the forthcoming pages, we will address key factors which have contributed significantly to the evolution of conventional religion. In each case, I will cite particular religions as an example. Before we exit this part, let us bear in mind one vital fact.

Conventional religion, as opposed to true religion, lacks two crucial features: universal applicability and the capacity to preserve its genuineness. These two features characterize true religion. They underpin the religion's capacity to meet the various needs of mankind while preserving its identity and genuine character. Conventional religion, on the other hand, is influenced but hardly influences, is continuously shaped but rarely shapes human life without compromising its genuineness or falling short of meeting certain needs. People, culture, folklore, and politics invent this religion or, like a piece of clay, mould a once true religion into whatever form they wish. Stewart Means cites the example of Christianity:

"Christianity itself has already been deeply influenced by some of the changes which have taken place. The great forces of history press steadily upon all the institutions of society, and the form or expression of the religious life is profoundly affected by the movements of thought or changes in sentiment which take place in human society"[2].

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[1] Boodin, John E. (1915) *The Function of Religion*. The Biblical World, Vol. 46, No. 2, (Aug.), p. 71-72, The University of Chicago Press.

[2] Means, Stewart (1913) *The Future of Religion*. The Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 6, No. 3, (Jul.), p. 326, Cambridge University Press.

On the other hand, true religion, although flexibly responsive to diverse human needs, is capable of maintaining its defining features. It regulates change but does not open the gates wide to every change. It modifies ideologies and aligns them to serve its own goals, but never compromises its genuine character. Earnest Gellner, the British philosopher and anthropologist, cites the example of Islam:

"To say that secularization prevails in Islam is not contentious. It is simply false. Islam is as strong now as it was a century ago. In some ways, it is probably much stronger…Why should one particular religion be so markedly secularization-resistant? This is an important question…To continue the argument: in Islam, we see a pre-industrial faith, a founded, doctrinal, world religion in the proper sense, which, at any rate for the time being, totally and effectively defies the secularization thesis. So far, there is no indication that it will succumb to secularization in the future either"[(1)].

Before we conclude, it is of paramount importance that we settle the case between man and religion. Before accusing religion of any evil or passivity, we must prosecute the main culprit, and if we are to incriminate a particular party then that party is man. Human beings are key players in creating conventional religion. The human factor has either taken the form of 'distorting' the true religion or 'rejecting' it while subsequently replacing it with a new metamorphosed one. In some cases, as will be shown later, the former (distortion) has led to the latter (rejection), as in the case of Christianity. The fierce struggle between the Church and the Enlightenment movement gave rise to secularism, where religion became effectually incapacitated. Evidently, it turns out that religion, which happens to be an integral human need, is neither evil by nature nor a steady source of ills. We alone are responsible for

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(1) Gellner, Ernest (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Routledge, London & New York, p. 5, 18.

making our experience, our interpretation, our understanding of religion hell on earth. James H. Leuba perceptively wrote:

"With chemicals one may cure, or kill; with high-power propaganda one may enlighten and thus promote brotherhood, or deceive and thus arouse angry passions. Failure to employ the means at our disposal for the general good is the root cause of the present distressing situation"[1].

Let us now see how religion suffered at the hands of man.

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[1] Leuba, James H. (1950) *The Reformation of the Churches*, Boston, p. 3.

Religion Distorted

Dr. Jerald F. Dirks, a former ordained minister in the United Methodist Church and a graduate of Harvard University School, has embarked on an interfaith study of three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The study came out in his book *The Cross and the Crescent* in which he dedicated a chapter to a fair analysis of the scriptures of each religion. In this book, he explains that the Torah's composition of five Biblical books, together known as the Pentateuch, is more than likely an outcome of frequent cut-and-paste compilations whose material's provenance is undated and unidentifiable[1]. Dr. Jerald expresses such cut-and-paste processes in a tone of dissatisfaction with the multitude of books making up the Torah and the New Testament.

A provocative study which analyzed the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures is that of Dr. Maurice Bucaille, a French scientist and winner of the French Academy Award. Bucaille shows how such Scriptures were treated like laboratory specimens, subjected to all sorts of experimentation. He says:

—The Church has made incisive cuts in the profusion of books relating the life and teachings of Jesus".

Yet, many Christians, upon reading the Gospels, wonder why they feel —embarrassed and even abashed when they stop to think about the meaning of certain descriptions (in the Gospels)"[2], says Bucaille who concludes:

—Why be surprised by the fact that some evangelists distort certain events in Jesus' life with the object of defending a personal point of view? Why be surprised by the omission of

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[1] Dirks, Jerald F. (2001) *The Cross & The Crescent*, Amana publications, United States, p. 48.

[2] Bucaille, Maurice, *The Bible The Quran And Science*, Translated by Alastair D. Pannell, Kazi Publications, Lahore, p. 44.

certain events? Why be surprised by the fictitious nature of other events described?"[1]

Biblical scholars who have reached similar conclusions are quoted by Arthur Watham, in his article: *The Bible in the New Light*. Watham cites biblical scholars who do not "hesitate to say of the opening chapters of Genesis, which record the creation of the earth, of man, and the beginning of human progress, that these chapters present no account of the real beginnings", for they contain statements "inconsistent with what is independently known of the early history of the earth, and of mankind upon it"[2].

These critical conclusions about the Bible's authenticity did not only circulate among the professional elite, but were also broadcasted to the wider populace. On November 10, 1897, Rev. Chancellor Lias, in a correspondence to *The Guardian*, wrote, "it becomes ever more clear to the Bible student that there is a large human element in Scripture"[3].

The fact that Christian scripture has suffered human tampering, not only explains the many discrepancies between the old and new Testaments, but also explains why such discrepancies exist in the first place. Rev. G.H. Richardson, from Bunker Hill, Illinois, reveals disturbing facts about the Bible:

"It cannot be questioned that many pagan as well as uncritical Jewish ideas are attached to our views of the Bible. When the Christian church took over the Old Testament it took too many Jewish and pagan theories with it, and these have too long been hanging like a millstone round the neck of Biblical studies"[4].

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[1] *Ibid*: p. 108.
[2] Watham, Arthur E. (1910) The Bible in the New Light, *Biblical World Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p 49.
[3] *Ibid*.
[4] G.H. Richardson (1916) The Value of Biblical Archaeology, *Biblical World Journal*, Vol.48, No. 1, p. 17.

Along the same vein Dr. Gary D. Guthrie, a world authority on comparative religion, who explains why many contradictions exist not only between the old and new Testaments but also among the four Gospels, writes:

"The writers of the Christian Gospels, as well as the compilers, were pressed to please too many bickering factions (Gnostic, Pauline, and Pertine, to name just the major ones). This is the reason that many contradictions, such as a kingdom of this world and not yet of this world, existed"[(1)].

We finally turn to Thomas Paine[(2)], who confirms what has been quoted so far:

"Had it been the object or intention of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion[(3)], he would undoubtedly have written the system himself, or procured it to be written in his life-time, but there is no publication extant authenticated with his name. All the books called the New Testament were written after his death"[(4)].

What about Buddhism and Hinduism?[(5)] Have they spared the discontent of their own followers? Jawaharlal Nehru - the first prime minister of independent India (1947-64) – cast doubt on the nature of Hinduism. In *The Discovery of India* he candidly says:

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(1) Guthrie, G. D. (1997) *The Wisdom Tree: A Journey to the Heart of God*, Ocean Tree Books, p. 101.

(2) A deist, Paine was a secretary to the committee of foreign affairs in the American Revolution.

(3) Jesus did not establish a new religion and this is confirmed in Matthew (5:17): "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (The Bible, NIV edition).

(4) Paine, Thomas (1984) *The Age of Reason*, Prometheus Books, p. 25.

(5) According to English historian, Arnold Toynbee, Buddhism and Hinduism are a "metamorphosis of philosophies into religions", thus having no divine origin, as is in the case of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism (See Toynbee, Arnold (1956) *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 122).

"Hinduism, as a faith, is vague, amorphous, many-sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the word. In its present form, and even in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other."(1)
Swami D. Theertha puts Hinduism under the microscope:

"Frankly speaking, it is not possible to say definitely who is a Hindu and what Hinduism is. These questions have been considered again and again by eminent scholars, and so far no satisfactory answer has been given. Hinduism has within itself all types of religions such as theism, atheism, polytheism and so forth…Its conflicting philosophies will confound any ordinary person" (2).

Like Hinduism, Buddhism had its own problems. From the beginning, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, taught an unnatural form of religiosity, one that proved hostile to both life and human nature. Charles Seignobos explains:

"To live is to be unhappy, taught Buddha. Every man suffers because he desires the goods of this world, youth, health, life, and cannot keep them. All life is a suffering; all suffering is born of desire. To suppress suffering, it is necessary to root out desire; to destroy it one must cease from wishing to live, "emancipate one's self from the thirst of being". The wise man is he who casts aside everything attached to this life…one must cease successively from feeling, wishing, thinking"(3).

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(1) Nehru, Jawaharlal *(1983) The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, p. 75.
(2) Theertha, Swami D. (1992) *History of Hindu Imperialism*, Madras, p. 178.
(3) Seignobos, Charles (1906) *History of Ancient Civilization*, Translated by Arthur Wilde, New York, (edit.) p. 59.

Religion Rejected

In the case of Christianity, man's distortion of religion has placed it in direct confrontation with established observations, scientific facts, and sometimes common sense. Historians cite Galileo Galilei, the Italian mathematician, astronomer, and physicist, who unwaveringly declared the Bible unreliable on scientific matters[1].

Before proceeding any further, it might be worthwhile to briefly address the controversial topic of *science-and-religion*. German physicist Max Planck once asserted that "there can never be any real opposition between religion and science"[2]. The reader should pay attention to the qualifying word 'real', for without it Planck's claim becomes easily refutable. 'Real' opposition may only occur between a false version of religion and genuine science or vice versa (a false science and genuine religion). Ken Wilber rephrases the idea:

"There is bogus or pseudo-science just as much as there is bogus or pseudo-religion, and the only worthwhile battle is between genuine and bogus, not between science and religion"[3]

Long before Planck and Wilber, Ibn-Taimiyyah, one of Islam's most celebrated scholars, elaborately addressed the *reason-versus-religion* problem in his magnum opus: *Daru' Taaruthil Aqli Wannaql* (Preventing Conflict between Reason and Religion). His focal argument was that, at the outset, if any real conflict happens to exist between religion and reason, then both or one of either should be false. He further argued

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[1] See *Western Civilization Since 1600*, Birdsall S. Vault, p. 60, McGraw-Hill's College Review Books.

[2] Planck, Max (2001) The Mystery of Being. In Wilber, Ken (Ed.) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, p.161, Shambhala, Boston & London.

[3] Wilber, Ken (2001) Of Shadows and Symbols. In Wilber, K. (Ed.) *Quantum Questions:Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, p.20, Shambhala, Boston & London.

that established rational/empirical knowledge and genuine religion are never contradictory and must corroborate each other. Yet if any conflict happens to occur between these two, then it is our understanding that is at fault[1].

Back to our topic; the West felt that the split between Christianity and science was necessary because no material progress, no scientific advances, no intellectual prosperity, could have been possible with a distorted and reality-resistant belief system[2]. Professor John Blackie mentions among the debilitating factors in Christianity: retirement from the world, prolonged solitary meditation, austere abstinence from worldly enjoinments, and viewing human life as being a curse rather than a blessing[3]. Murad Wilfried Hoffmann mentions the most debilitating of all: "the stifling dogmatism of the churches and the obscurantism of the clerics" who were considered by their Enlightenment contemporaries as "uneducated, intolerant, and despotic sycophants"[4]. The

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[1] Ibn-Taimiyyah, Ahmed (2008) *Dar'u Taaruthil Aqli Wannaql*, (edit) Mohammad Rashaad Salim. Published by Darul-Fadheelah, Saudi Arabia.

[2] Take as an example the 'Original Sin' doctrine. Several critics (Ellison, et al.: 2009) of religion have reported some of its deleterious repercussions, such as **(a)** erosion of positive psychological resources such as self-esteem and mastery; **(b)** fostering of negative feelings such as guilt and shame; and **(c)** diversion of energy and attention from constructive efforts at personal change and growth. (See Ellison, C. G. et al. (2009) *Blessed Assurance: Religion, Anxiety, and Tranquility among US Adults*. Social Science Research, 38: 664).

[3] Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 130, 133.

[4] Hoffmann, M. (2001) *Religion on the Rise,* p. 12. The renowned Arnold Toynbee, in his *Study of History*, ascribed the schism in Christendom's social body to a deeper schism in the souls of human beings. Drawing on Gilbert's *Satanism and the World Order*, Toynbee suggests that one of the main sources of such schism is the belief, held by many saints and martyrs, that world order is evil and a lie while goodness and truth are persecuted rebels. When human beings are ordained to combat world order and themselves, there is every likelihood that, after some time, they will either recoil and surrender or split into factions holding differing views as to what concept should

apostles of enlightenment such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and their fellows may have deeply regarded preference to a pseudo religion rather than pure reason as a form of high treason. It was out of such dismay that these people revolted against institutional Christianity and rejected the concept of the Trinity[1]. They were not atheists, but devout deists who firmly believed in a single, albeit detached and indifferent God who reveals himself through science and intellectual reflection[2].

Borrowing Ken Wilber's terms, *pseudo* religion cannot come to terms with *genuine* science and vice versa. The only solution is to dump the pseudo element or separate the two and keep them afar. However, people had to pay the price of the separation as it led to disunity between body and soul and dug a wide ditch between the material and spiritual. Secularism took over and became the new religion after which a rapid wave of man-made religions followed: communism, socialism, capitalism, liberalism, democracy, etc. To be fair, however, such systems developed as reactions to existing problems. They are not absolute evil and they certainly have something to offer; but people, worn out and confused by emerging and conflicting ideologies, have become more sensitive to the menace of half-way solutions, which are constructive on one side and destructive on the other. All man-made systems have

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prevail regarding the nature of the world and humans' role in it (Toynbee, A. (1946) *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, p. 432-433).

[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Ibid*. Thomas Paine's monologue may serve to summarize the deist's catechism. Paine professes, "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make fellow-creatures happy…I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church" (Paine, T. (1984) *The Age of Reason*, Prometheus Books, p. 7-8).

their own loopholes and imperfections, which inevitably follow from the human being‘s weaknesses and fallibilities.

A system that fails to maintain the 'golden mean' will either oppress man or spoil him. An example of the former is Communism; an example of the latter is Capitalism. The Communist system made people languish in poverty. In Freidman's words, Communism ~~—w~~as a great system for making people equally poor. In fact, there was no better system in the world for that than communism”[(1)]. Socialism was no better. The enforcement of Socialism in Russia resulted into an appalling rate of serfdom. Professor Vault wrote:

"Well over 90 percent of the Russian people were serfs, who enjoyed virtually no personal freedom and lived in poverty"[(2)].

Capitalism, first thought to be the herald of happiness and prosperity, only added insult to injury and turned out to be the harbinger of many plights.[(3)]

With its materialistic ideals, capitalism only succeeds in breeding a society which is spiritually and morally depleted. Daniel Bell, a Harvard sociologist, recognized that capitalism "becomes self-destructive once it loses itself in frantic obsession with scientific and economic progress. In this case, what used to be fundamental virtues like hard work, loyalty, thrift, discipline, and the drive to succeed are perverted and begin to poison the system from within in the form of

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(1) Freidman Thomas L. (2006) *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p. 51.

(2) Vault, Birdsall S. (1990) *Western Civilization Since 1600*. McGraw-Hill’s College Review Books, p.166.

(3) The collapse of capitalism in Argentina (2002) strikes the death knell for capitalism in similar capitalistic countries. Cuba’s Prime Minister, Fidel Castro, said, “This system (capitalism) cannot continue and if it cannot continue, it will collapse” (*Al-Hayat Newspaper*, p.8, issue 14215, 8 Feb 2002). To give you a clue, the recent global economic crises (2008-2009) rings a bell.

consumerism, sexual promiscuity, egalitarianism, 'slacker'-syndrome, and the like"[1].

Michael Parenti, one of America's most astute political analysts, is in a position to analyze the problem of capitalism from several standpoints:

"There is no social formation more profoundly immoral than a big capitalist corporation. It operates without any scruples and will try to get away with whatever it can…Capitalism is a system without a soul, without humanity. It tries to reduce every human activity to market profitability. It has no loyalty to democracy, family values, culture, Judeo-Christian ethics, ordinary folks, or any other shibboleths mouthed by its public relations representatives on special occasions. It has no loyalty to any nation; its only loyalty is to its own system of capital accumulation"[2].

The roots of these problems are implanted in the infrastructure of capitalistic societies. They are steadily nurtured by an absence of efficient state monitoring. These ailments combined with an exaggerated liberality granted to the public, provide an open arena for crime[3], poverty, [4]and immorality[5] to grow and develop.

Upholding freedom as part of its so-called success, capitalism is nearly lifeless without the spirit of democracy. Democracy, in turn, is almost inoperative without the

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[1] Hoffmann, M. (2001) *Religion on the Rise,* p. 89.

[2] Parenti, M. (1998) *America Besieged*, City Lights, p. 41, 84, 85.

[3] In 1993, the total number of murder victims in the United States was more than 23 thousand people. Is this a war? (Source: Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports for the United States, 1997)

[4] In 1995, the rate of persons below poverty level in United States was 36,425 in every 1,000. I wonder what is the rate of citizens at poverty level? (Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, USA)

[5] Dr. James Bringham, a consultant in genito-urinary medicine at Guy's and St Thomas's hospital in London, reports that young people at school were throwing condoms around the classroom at the age of five!".(*The Guardian*, Wednesday, Feb. 27th, 2002).

secularist ideology[1], where religion is chained, thrown into quarantine, and reduced to spending an hour or so in a church, mosque, chapel, synagogue, or shrine. Under the communist atheistic regime, religion is discredited as the opium of the people; while under capitalistic secularism, religion belongs to God and has nothing to do with Caesar[2]. Jerry Jacobs explains the problem with the latter:

"Traditional other worldly-values are being increasingly secularized and rationalized in a Weberian[3] sense. The consequences of this rationalization process is that traditional spiritually oriented values are being increasingly displaced under rational capitalism by a vacuum"[4].

From America, the same problem is addressed by Professors Glenn and Stack from a similar angle. They bitterly denounce the discrimination exercised against religious people under so-called American freedom:

"American democracy by constitutionally privileging secularism, offers Catholics in public life a strong inducement to abandon, relativize, or remain silent about their moral beliefs, insofar as these conflict with secularism. Catholics have to act like - not necessarily be - secularists. That makes it

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(1) Joseph Schumpeter, an influential economist and social scientist, in his *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942) unequivocally states, "History clearly confirms. . . [that] . . . modern democracy rose along with capitalism, and in causal connection with it . . .modern democracy is a product of the capitalist process" (Almond, Gabriel A. (1991) Capitalism and Democracy, *Journal of Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3. (Sep.), p. 468).

(2) See: Matthew: 22:21, King James Version.

(3) After Max Weber, the German economist and sociologist. He connected the rise of capitalism with the religious desire to "find a sign of predestined salvation in worldly success". (See *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 398)

(4) Jacobs, Jerry (1971) From Sacred to Secular: The Rationalization of Christian Theology. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Spring), p. 8.

spiritually and politically unsafe, not to say impossible, for Catholics to be democrats now"[1].

Confirming the conclusion of Ken Wilber, Karen Armstrong, and a legion of other scholars, the conflict between secularism and religion has only revealed the indispensability of religion in the lives of human beings. In 1998, Robert W. Hefner recorded secularists' fear of a global religious upsurge:

"It is not surprising that proponents of conventional secularization theories have been baffled by the recent resurgence of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity around the world"[2].

The need to embrace a belief system where body and soul, reason and religion, come to terms with each other has preoccupied the minds of prominent scientists and thinkers: Albert Einstein whose phrase: ~~–s~~cience without religion is lame"[3] still resonates in many academic circles, and Thomas Carlyle who warned that ~~–W~~With our sciences and encyclopedias, we are apt to forget the Divineness, in those laboratories of ours" [4]. The famous German physicist, Max Planck, was once asked the question: "do you think that science might be a substitute for religion?", and his answer was, "anybody who has been seriously engaged in scientific work of any kind realizes that over the entrance to the gates of the temple of science are written the words: *Ye must have*

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[1] Novak, Michael (2000) Democracy Unsafe, Compared to What? The Totalitarian Impulse of Contemporary Liberals. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1, Christianity and Politics: Millennial Issue II. (Winter) p. 31.

[2] Robert W. Hefner (1998) Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 27, p. 89-90.

[3] *Science, Philosophy and Religion: a Symposium,* 1941.

[4] The Hero as Prophet, Mahomet: Islam*,* a lecture delivered on Friday 8th May 1840.

faith. It is a quality which the scientist cannot dispense with"[1].

Religion: a never-fading need

In the end, however, what should concern us most is this: religion turns out to be an integral human need. All religions appear to share one common denominator and that is the profound yearning to relate to some Ultimate Source of Being[2]. As William James once put it, "every thinker, however, practically elects from among the various worlds

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[1] Planck, Max (2001) The Mystery of Being. In Wilber, Ken (Ed.) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, p.162, Shambhala, Boston & London.

[2] Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, two authorities in the psychology of religion, surveyed a large sample of people and reported what corroborates this conclusion. They observed that "religious experiences convey, to those who have them, that they have been in contact with a very powerful being or force, 'whether they call this God or not', that there is a unity in the whole of creation...they have had experience of timelessness, perhaps eternity; and they believe that they have been in contact with some kind of reality" (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle (1997) *The Psychology of Religious Behavior, Belief and Experience*, Routledge, p. 96).

someone to be for him the world of *ultimate* realities"[1]. This fact rests at the heart of religious experience. The problem remains in finding the faith with the most coherent belief system. In other words, where is that system which is really capable of marrying sense with sanity and science with soul? The present book is an attempt to answer this very question.

"The modern and postmodern world is still living in the grips of flatland, of surfaces, of exteriors devoid of interior anything: 'no within, no deep'. The only large-scale alternatives are an exuberant embrace of shallowness (as with extreme postmodernism), or a regression to the interiors of premodern modes, from mythic religion to tribal magic to narcissistic new age".

(Ken Wilber: 1998)

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[1] James, William (1889) The Psychology of Belief; *Mind*, Vol. 14, No. 55. (Jul), p. 330.

THE QUEST FOR TRUTH

The Need for Guidance

> "Science is an endless story, which is very exciting. Unfortunately, we human beings are limited in time, and we want some definitive answers to our questions".
>
> (Bruno Guiderdoni)[1]

One of the most interesting facts about human beings is their ability to introspect their inner world and use the bricks of retrospective experiences in building up their future selves. No doubt we possess unparalleled capacities compared to all living species known so far. Yet, one important reality about human beings is that attaining the highest levels of wealth, health and wisdom does not, at all, warrant them absolute independence. We all know that wealth will disappear with time, health will corrode with degeneration, and wisdom will ebb away with senility. Indeed this would suffice to confirm our inherent weaknesses. We have to lose something in order to gain something else[2]. Another deadly limitation is our subjectivity and unwarranted pride, which are continually

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[1] Guiderdoni, Bruno (2001) Reading God's Signs. In *Faith in Science: Scientists search for truth*, Edited by W. Mark Richardson and Gordy Slack, Routledge, London and New York, p.73.

[2] One insightful philosophical reflection on the feeble and finite character of human nature is offered by Najmuddin Attufi, the 14th century Muslim scholar, wherein he wrote: "Any creature, such as the human being, does not create its own actions or any other's because it is well-established that complete knowledge about something is a necessary consequence of having created it. If human beings had really created their own actions, for example, they would have known every detail about them, in quantity, quality, and purpose. But this corollary does not hold, because we can clearly see that human beings articulate speech while incognizant of the number of its letters, words, or its structural and semantic characteristics; and walk while incognizant of the number of their steps and the exact ends of this walk" (Attufi, Najmuddin (2002) *Al-Isharaat Al-Ilahiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 360).

sustained by not only our chase after bare essentials, but also after superfluous luxuries and secondary needs.

Our journey towards truth requires snapping out of our tiny subjectivism and paying attention to the greater reality of existence. First, stop at a distance, have a good look at the woods, then walk in and explore. Once we start searching for a meaning to life, we - whether we like it or not - enter the precincts of another realm called 'religion'. At this juncture, true religion – and only true religion - has the potential to deliver humanity from an ominous future. But there is a problem that needs to be solved: if religion has been distorted, if science cannot get rid of empirical error and human fallibility, then how can we find the truth?

Before we set out in search of truth, we need to know which way to go. The paths of life are many. Each one may lead to a certain truth; some others may endlessly stretch forward or stop at the brink of a deep dark valley called *nowhere*. When Alice met the Cheshire Cat in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the famous fairytale written by Lewis Carroll, she asked it, "Would you tell me please which way I ought to go from here?"; "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to?" replied the Cat; "I don't much care where…?" replied Alice; "Then it doesn't matter which way you go", said the Cat. This story signifies how important it is to have a sense of direction in life, and this largely depends on whether we, as human beings, are individually and collectively aware of our immediate needs and long-term choices. As one poem goes:

And though you travel many roads,
There‘s but one way and that‘s the one you chose

For a truth to be ultimate it has to be accessible to all, not esoteric at all. So, if we mean by *the truth* that essential quality and basic level of reality which all people need, then it should

be simple, manifest, and accessible to all. Every religion will have elements of truth. It is the truth seeker's task, as it has always been, to find the way of life that synthesizes these elements into one coherent whole. Only something of this kind has the power to attract the hearts of millions of people from different classes, races, and nations. Only a religion of such attracting power is destined to become the fastest growing religion in the world. When it comes to this measure, only one religion stands out: Islam[1].

"The emergence of Islam on the global stage has raised fundamental questions about the marginalization of religion in the West"[2], writes Neil Ormerod, Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute of Theology, Philosophy, and Religious Education at Australian Catholic University.

What is it about Islam that has made people enter it in droves since September 11th?[3] What is it about Islam that motivates many to "join a community so different from and uncomfortable with the larger western society to which they belong?"[4]? What we see now has a history. In 1938, George Bernard Shaw, predicted that "If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred

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[1] In his bestseller, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Professor Samuel Huntington estimates that, by the year 2025, Islam will "account for about 30 percent of the world's population". He also states that "the proportion of Muslims in the world will continue to increase dramatically" (Huntington, S. (2003) *The Clash of Civilizations*, New York, p. 65-66). Nicholas D. Kristof from *The New York Times* writes, "Islam appears to be, in percentage terms, the fastest-growing major religion in the world today" (October 15, 2006). *The Telegraph* reports, "The fastest growing religion is Islam" (December 25, 2005). Also does *The Times*: "Muslims are the fastest-growing section of the European population" (October 18, 2003).

[2] Ormerod, Neil (2007) In Defense of Natural Theology: Bringing God into the Public Realm, *Irish Theological Quarterly*; 72; 227.

[3] Some analysts report that the 'campaign against terrorism' has increased the number of converts (*The New York Times*, July 19, 2004).

[4] Lang, Jeffery (1997) *Even Angles Ask*, p. 137.

years, it could be Islam"[1]. Five decades later, William Montgomery[2], the well-known historian of Arabic and Islamic history, only came to confirm Shaw's foresight and further predicted:

"Islam is certainly a strong contender for the supplying of the basic framework of the one religion of the future"[3].

At this juncture, one may want to ask: what facts and truths account for Islam being the fastest growing faith in the world?

Before proceeding any further, a fatal misconception about the meaning of Islam has to be nipped in the bud. It must be borne in mind from the start that Islam is NOT a religion in the conventional sense. The word 'religion' in the western and eastern traditions not only seriously falls short of defining the scope of Islam, but also reduces its reality to a level unrecognized by the typical Muslim. To speak of Islam is to speak of a complete way of life, a comprehensive spiritual, moral, rational, social, ethical, legislative, jurisprudential, economic, political, regulatory system. Islam is not a personal issue, an isolatable entity, or a baggage of hallowed rites and rituals. It is a universal law which aims at satisfying various human needs on two levels of existence: the physical and nonphysical. This, I hope, the reader will find clearly evident throughout the rest of this book.

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(1) *The Genuine Islam*, V.1, 1936. Shaw was a world-famous Irish critic and playwright, born 1856 and died 1950.

(2) *Islam and Christianity Today*, London, 1983, p. 11.

(3) This comes in stark contrast to Samuel M. Zwemer's contention, back in 1916, that "Islam is a dying religion" and that "from the outset it had in it the germs of death" and that "neither the character of the Koran nor of its Prophet have in them the promise or potency of life that will endure" (Samuel M. Zwemer (1916) *The Disintegration of Islam*, New York, p. 7).

Truth, Two Needs, and Two Levels of Reality

> "The menace of scientific power, uncontrolled by the religious ideal, hangs like a shadow over the future".
>
> (Haydon, A. Eustace)[1]

From an Islamic standpoint, truth in is not an either-or thing. Muslim scholars have always viewed truth not in narrow positivistic terms but rather viewed it as both multifaceted and having a reality of its own yet assumes a form that lends itself to human comprehension.

But because reality is multileveled and can only be perceived through a filter of beliefs, values, language, culture, and the finite properties of the sensory system, we can never be confident that we have an exact understanding of everything about something (or even something about everything!). This is not an endorsement of the cynical postmodernist claim that all realities, all truths, are nothing but illusions or, at best, the treacherous effects of human language. The Islamic stance, on the other hand, repudiates the naturalistic claim that truth is the property of science and, therefore, anything that lies beyond its territory is myth and mirage unless it lends itself to observation, experimentation, and mathematical quantification[2].

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[1] Haydon, A. Eustace (1925) Modernism as a World-Wide Movement. *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 5, No.1, (Jan.), p. 10, The University of Chicago Press.

[2] It's worth quoting Stephen Jay Gould who, in a similar vein, wrote:

"Most of us are not naïve enough to believe the old myth that scientists are paragons of unprejudiced objectivity, equally open to all possibilities, and reaching conclusions only by weight of evidence and logic of argument. We understand that biases, preferences, social values, and psychological attitudes all play a strong role in the process of discovery" (Gould, S. J. (2000) *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, Vintage Books, p. 244).

Islamic epistemology adopts a multilayered approach to truth. There are social truths, psychological truths, ethical truths, moral truths, historical truths, natural truths, and religious truths. In principle, each one of these occupies a legitimate territory on the map of reality.

The Islamic scholar Ahmed Ibn-Taimiyyah (1263–1328 AD), who was ahead of his time, believed that we cannot grasp the reality of any one thing from all possible dimensions, with the same precision, at the same time. In other words, we are capable of perceiving part of the truth about a given thing but not every truth about its being. The Islamic approach to epistemology largely owes much of its character to the principle of moderation (*Wasatiyah*), a principle which reverberates across many domains, on various levels: individual, social, political, religious, economical, and scientific. Generally, the above principle disapproves of recourse to extremes and the perpetuation of dichotomies unless one is adequately justified to do so.

No doubt science has hugely augmented our knowledge, empowered our being, and changed our lives to the better in many respects. On the other hand, it has offered us the lesson that we are far from perfect and that all our efforts will forever remain hampered by indelible limitations. Kurt Gödel's[1] (1906-1978) Theorem, known as the *incompleteness theorem*, perfectly demonstrates the limited nature of human knowledge. In a nutshell, it teaches us that human knowledge based on a finite set of axioms or fundamental truths cannot prove its own truth…it needs 'external validation'. When it first came out in 1931, "it had a devastating impact", says A. W. Moore, for it had "laid waste a variety of firmly held convictions"[2], and proved that the human mind is incapable of verifying the truth about the set of intuitions forming the

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[1] A prominent logician, mathematician and philosopher.

[2] Moore, A.W. (2001) *The Infinite*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 172.

basis of its logic. It can only do so by recourse to external validation.

The Enlightenment euphoria that swept across Europe in the eighteenth century convinced many that hard sciences were the only perfect and reliable modes of knowledge. The social sciences (such as political science, sociology, history, and psychology), let alone religious experience, were demeaned and discredited as unscientific. America's philosopher, William James, eloquently diagnosis this frenzied obsession with the 'scientific':

"There is included in human nature an ingrained naturalism and materialism of mind which can only admit facts that are actually tangible. Of this sort of mind, the entity called "science" is the idol. Fondness for the word "scientist" is one of the notes by which you may know its votary, and its short way of killing any opinion that it disbelieves in is to call it "unscientific"[(1)].

In the absence of truth, our vehement quest will always carry its indelible drawbacks. There will always be two margins of error: the margin of human **fallibility** and the margin of human **frailty**. Both pertain to the intellectual and physical limitations impacting every aspect of human life[(2)]. In order to make up for these two limitations, we need to find the

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(1) James, Williams (1895) Is Life Worth Living? *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Oct.), p. 16.

(2) Modern science confirms this twofold problem with two instances from quantum physics. The first is called the **observer effect** and the other is called the **uncertainty principle**, formulated by Werner Heisenberg. In the former, the observer of an experiment will inevitably interact with it and therefore will affect the precision of the results. The latter has to do with measuring the momentum and position of a particle. If we increase our precision in measuring the position of a particle, we are forced to lose precision in measuring the momentum of that particle. (*The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, John D. Barrow & Frank J. Tipler, p.458, 1996, Oxford University Press; *The New Quantum Universe*, Tony Hey & Patrick Walters, p. 17, Cambridge University Press).

system with the most comprehensive and reliable epistemology and ontology.

Thus, it is no exaggeration that our knowledge of reality primarily hinges on our understanding of human nature[(1)].

Given the fact that we are holistic beings, dissatisfied with fragmental explanations and always in search of a comprehensive meaning of life, consciousness, and the universe, we cannot but interact with two levels of being. A fundamental ontological truism in Islam is the belief that being, with respect to human perception, is a twofold realm. The realm of the unknown or unobservable, for which the appellation 'Al-Ghaib' (Quran: 6:7) stands for in Arabic; and the realm of the known or observable, for which the term 'Al-Shahadah' (Quran: 6:7) is the Arabic equivalent.

In their quest for truth, human beings struggle to acquire the most reliable and comprehensive representation of reality, on both levels: the observable and unobservable. Any inquiry that fails to accommodate these two (related) realities or, at least, account for their implications will only yield a fragmentary, malformed and consequently unsatisfactory interpretation of being. Holism, integrativeness, and unity deeply characterize the ontological and epistemological foundations of Islamic thought.

Islam not only recognizes the diverse needs procured by the twofold nature of being but also assimilates them so that, in

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(1) The realization that positivism cannot - and shall never - supply an accurate understanding of reality gave rise to present-day critical realism, the view that human scientific activity is fallible and that we should only strive to draw the best possible map of reality which, in all cases, shall remain short of reflecting reality as it is. The tendency of some hard-headed scientists to equate reality with their perception of it may account for much of the hubris that is endemic to much of their writing. In Garry Potter's words, we should all remind ourselves of the fact that "reality is however it is. But our ostensible knowledges [*sic*] of it are fallible and subject to impoverishment, revision and upon occasion may wholly be false" (Potter, G. (2000) *The Philosophy of Social Science: New Perspectives*, Peasron Education, p. 189).

Max Planck's' words, "all the powers of the human soul act together in perfect balance and harmony"[1].

In order to appreciate these vital aspects of Islam, it would be worthwhile to examine three major sources of knowledge in Islam: **Authentic revelation, True conceptual knowledge, and True physical knowledge.**

Authentic revelation communicates knowledge from a source external to and unaffected by, yet commensurate with, human experience. The source of revelation is Allah, the Originator of existence and the Truth of all truths.

Revelatory knowledge is true and compatible with the established facts, human nature, and the flawless conclusions of sound thinking. The book of revelation in Islam is the Quran, revealed to the Arabian Prophet Mohammad the son of Abdullah[2]. The Quran, like its Author, is perfect and incorruptible. This belief constitutes the doctrine of the miracle of *inimitability*, which asserts that the knowledge, language, and style of the Quran cannot be]re[produced[3]. Its text is as intact as it was first revealed, thus confirming the divine promise to preserve it from change and loss.

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[1] Planck, Max (2001) The Mystery of Being. In Wilber, Ken (Ed.) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Greatest Physicists*, (edit.), p.161, Shambhala, Boston & London. Unsurprisingly, "religious individuals frequently display higher levels of emotional well-being than do nonreligious individuals", one recent study (Koole et al.:2010, p. 10) has confirmed. To explain this apparent paradox, 30 independent experiments conducted by different researchers using diverse paradigms, religious beliefs, and practices were analyzed. They all supported the suggestion that religion facilitates "an implicit self-regulatory mode that is integrative, embodied, and **oriented toward the well-being of the whole person**" (Koole, S. L. et al. (2010) Why Religion's Burdens Are Light: From Religiosity to Implicit Self-Regulation; *Personality and Social Psychology Review*; 14(1) 95 –107).

[2] More detail on his life and mission at the end of this book.

[3] Esposito, John L. (2005) *Islam: The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, p. 19.

"We have sent down the Quran and surely we will guard it"[1].

The Quran avows its own authenticity by the call to subject its text to contemplation and critical thinking. The time-proven inimitability of the Quran is the challenge which no one - not even the most erudite and knowledgeable in language or any of the sciences - has been able to meet.

"... they say, "He (Prophet Muhammad) has forge it (the Quran)". Say: "Bring then ten Surahs (chapters) the like of which, and call whomsoever you can other than God (to help you) if you speak the truth!" But if they do not answer you, then be certain that it is sent down with the knowledge of God and that none has the right to be worshipped but He. Will you then submit to God"[2].

"The Quran does not contain the inaccuracies that are to be found in the Bible", says Maurice Bucaille, a French scientist who had embarked on a comparative study of the Quran and Bible in the light of modern scientific discoveries. Bucaille adds that "it provides precise information on certain points that, in the west, come as a great surprise for many people today"[3].

The *Sunnah* is the other form of revelation. The term Sunnah stands for Prophet Mohammad's interpretation and practical demonstration of the Quran[4]. Several verses in the Quran command Muslims to follow the way of the Prophet, whose religious actions and decisions are guarded against error.

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[1] Quran: 15: 9.
[2] Quran: 12-14.
[3] Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man: The Answers of Science and the Holy scriptures*. New Delhi, p. 210.
[4] **Sunnah** is also formally defined as the traditions constitutive of what Prophet Mohammad said, did, and approved during his lifetime.

"Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow"[1].

"Nor does he (Mohammad) speak of (his own) desire. It is only a revelation revealed"[2].

The authenticity of the Sunnah, its legal status, and how it was transmitted safe and sound to later generations will be discussed in further detail towards the end of this book.

The Quran and the authentic Sunnah are the two major canons of Islamic law. Knowledge therein includes the fundamental beliefs (such as belief in one true God, His Attributes, the purpose of life, and life after death), the rulings of Islamic law (on the political, economical, social, and the individual level), the forms of worship, the major moral precepts, codes of conduct, the broad articles governing matters of faith and action, the treatment of doubt and uncertainty, the theme of good and evil, the criteria of distinguishing right from wrong, the psychology of human nature, the meaning of life, rational dialogues, instructive analogies, didactic parables, scientific facts, informative stories about past and future events, the creation of the world, man's appearance on earth, the end of the created world, and the destiny of man in the Life to come[3].

Revelatory knowledge directly aims at fulfilling the fundamental needs of the human condition, on the spiritual and material levels. Out of this zone in human nature spring profound questions; questions which find no satisfactory answers in the sciences, philosophies, or mundane human experiences. Indeed, final answers to such questions cannot rest with the ones who beg them. This would inescapably create a well-locked vicious circle. For those who have faith in

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[1] Quran: 33:21.
[2] Quran: 53: 3-4.
[3] Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man: The Answers of Science and the Holy scriptures*. New Delhi, p. 209.

faith, who feel that there's more to existence than what meets the eye, and believe in the unitary character of truth, such answers can only rest with The One source of all knowledge, The Originator of all realties, seen and unseen (Quran: 69: 38-39), known or unknown (Quran: 16:8).

The second reliable source of knowledge in Islam is true conceptual knowledge**.** This knowledge is obtained through reasoning[1]. It includes apodictic knowledge, facts obtained through rational thinking, and knowledge acquired through all types of principled intellectual exercise. It also includes verifiable uncertain knowledge; that is any form of knowledge amenable to substantiation (e.g. historiography, psychology, and other social sciences). In this regard, Rodinson notes, "repeated about fifty times in the Quran is the verb *aqala*, which means: connect ideas together, reason, understand an intellectual argument"[2].

The third reliable source of knowledge is true physical (experiential/empirical) knowledge**.** This pertains to observation, what we experience or perceive through the senses. Again, the verifiability of knowledge derived thereof depends on the soundness of evidence.

Islam had inculcated observational inquiry into the minds of Muslim scientists centuries before Francis Bacon (1561-1626) wrote his *New Organon*[3]. Many verses in the Quran underscore the importance of _obsȩrvation‘ as a way of exploring existence and verifying human knowledge about reality. In some verses, the Quran may call upon people to _witness‘ (Quran: 18:51 &

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(1) The English historian, Arnold Toynbee, describes Islam as **the most rational** of all the living higher religions (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, Arnold Toynbee, p. 22, 1956). Other notable scholars like Thomas Carlyle, Immanuel Kant, and Liebnitz also "viewed Islam as a rational and reasonable religion" (Qamar-ul Huda (2004) Orientalism. In *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Vol. 2, 516, (edit.) Richard C. Martin. Macmillan Reference, USA).

(2) Quoted in Lang, Jeffrey (2000) *Struggling to Surrender*, p. 23.

(3) Bacon, F. (2000) *The New Organon*, Cambridge University Press.

19:43) or encourage them to _see' or 'observe' (Quran: 88:17-19, 36:71, & 6:50), thus tempting Karen Armstrong to write:

"The Koran constantly stresses the need for intelligence in deciphering the 'signs' or 'messages' of God. Muslims are not to abdicate their reason but to look at the world attentively and with curiosity. It was this attitude that later enabled Muslims to build a fine tradition of natural science, which has never been seen as such a danger to religion as in Christianity"[(1)].

Truth is one but the roads of evidence are many and it's the sincere truth-seeker's responsibility to think, choose, explore, and then decide which roads draw him or her nearer to truth. The Quran uses the generic word 'Ayaat' to refer to the myriad 'signs', 'evidences', 'proofs' which people encounter on their journey to truth.

> "We will show them our signs in the furthest regions, and in their own selves, so that it becomes manifest to them that it (Quran) is the truth. Is it not enough that their Lord is a witness over everything?"[(2)].

In both cases, conceptual and empirical propositions should lend themselves to falsifiability or verifiability. That is they can be shown - either through pure reasoning, observation, or through both - to be true or false. Before Karl Popper could formally introduce this principle (i.e. falsifiability) in his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Islam endorsed it as an essential intellectual exercise many centuries ago[(3)]. For example, the

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(1) Armstrong, K. (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 172. Spinoza, on behalf of many of his contemporaries, complained of the Christianity of his time. "The light of reason is not only despised", says Spinoza "but by many even execrated as a source of impiety". (Spinoza, B. (2007) Theological-Political Treatise. In *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*, selected with introductions by Christopher Hitchens, Da Capo Press, p. 25).

(2) Quran 41: 53.

(3) According to Karl Popper, "All the statements of empirical science (or all 'meaningful' statements) must be capable of being finally decided,

Quran used this principle to challenge those who doubted the authenticity of the Quran. In chapter 12 verse 14, the unbelievers are asked to prove the falsity of the Quran by trying to produce the likeness of its text or find real discrepancies therein. If the unbelievers fail, which has been the case, then the Quran cannot be false, it must be true[(1)].

While Islam calls for a comprehensive inquiry by leaving the larger portion of existence open to reflection and investigation, it strongly disapproves of preoccupation with irrelevant minutiae and discourages futile grappling with the unfathomable (e.g. exact nature of the soul).

> "And they ask you about the soul. Say: the soul is one thing the knowledge of which is with my Lord. And little it is the knowledge you have been given"[(2)].

> "And do not follow what you have no (true) knowledge about "[(1)].

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with respect to their truth and falsity; we shall say that they must be 'conclusively decidable'. This means that their form must be such that to verify them and to falsify them must both be logically possible". (Popper, Karl (2005) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery,* Routledge, London, p. 17)
Another rule stated by Popper (*Ibid*: p. 32) is: "once a hypothesis has been proposed and tested, and has proved its mettle]i.e. has been corroborated[, it may not be allowed to drop out without good reason". This rational ruling has been phrased quite deftly by early Muslim scholars in the famous formula: "Certainty may not be abandoned for uncertainty unless there is a preponderance of evidence in favor of uncertainty". A summarized version of the latter formula is "Certainty should not be discarded in favor of doubt". (See Al-Sayuti, Jalal Al-Din (1998) *Al-Ashbah wan-Naza'ir*, Darussalam, Vol. 1, p. 151. Al-Sayuti was born 1445 and died 1505 AD). **However, it must be noted** that Karl Popper's epistemological philosophy does not hold for all forms of knowledge. Robert Nola, in his seminal essay *The Status of Popper's Theory of Scientific Method*, manages to show the narrow implications and applications of Popper's model (See Nola, Robert (1987) The Status of Popper's Theory of Scientific Method; *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*; 38(4):441-480).

(1) Quran: 12:14 & 82:4.

(2) Quran: 17: 85.

Abdullah Ibin-Mas'ood, a companion of Prophet Mohammed, offers an ethic in knowledge-seeking:

"He who has knowledge should say it, and he who hasn't should say: 'God knows best', for it is a sign of being knowledgeable to say 'I don't know' when you do not know"[(2)].

The Islamic injunction to seek well-founded knowledge is further secured by the call to remove the barriers which prevent people from seeing the truth. These include:

Blind imitation:

"When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has sent down." They say: "Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following." Would such be the case even though their fathers did not understand anything nor were they guided? "[(3)]

Ignorance:

"Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only men of understanding who benefit "[(4)].

Bias and injustice:

"So follow not your own desires, lest you avoid justice"[(5)].

"When you judge between people, you judge with justice"[(6)].

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(1) Quran: 17:36.
(2) Narrated by. *Bukhari*, No. 4435.
(3) Quran: 2:170.
(4) Quran: 39:9.
(5) Quran: 4:135.
(6) Quran: 4: 58.

Unfounded claims:

"Produce your proof if you are truthful"[1].

"Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful"[2].

And fruitless dispute:

"Verily! You are of those who disputed about that of which you had some knowledge; but why do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge?"[3].

I conclude this section with a relevant passage from Chittick's *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*. It summarizes Islam's standpoint with regards to thinking:

"Why should people think? Why shouldn‘t they just blindly accept whatever they‘re told? The basic Muslim answer is that people should think because they must think, because they are thinking beings. They have no choice but to think, because God has given them minds and intelligence. Not only that, but in numerous Quranic verses God has commanded them to think and to employ their intelligence…Anyone who has the capacity and talent to reflect upon God, the universe, and the human soul has the duty to do so. Not to do so is to betray one‘s own nature and to disobey God‘s instructions to ponder the signs"[4].

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[1] Quran: 2:111.
[2] Quran: 6:143.
[3] Quran: 3:66.
[4] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 5-6.

Existing Through Creation

"The cosmos can seem mysterious. Why are its laws of a kind which permit intelligent life to evolve? Why do its events even fall into patterns which persuade us to talk of 'laws' or of 'causal orderliness'? And why does it exist at all? Why is there something rather than nothing?"

(John Leslie)[1]

The beginning of creation – by the way, the mere mention of 'creation' is detestable to many atheists – is one of the most preoccupying riddles, to the extent that someone like Paul Davies, the well-known cosmologist, could not but attribute "an air of magic to it"[2]. When Stephen Hawking, the British theoretical physicist, thought about the origin of life and the universe, he could not find a more logical explanation than to assume the involvement of a Creator. He said:

–It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way except as the act of God who intended to create beings like us"[3].

Belief in the existence of a Creator is by no means indicative of immature thinking, as some atheists would like us to have it. Darwin himself in his *Descent of Man* testified that "whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe]is a question that[has been answered in the affirmative by some of the highest intellects that have ever existed"[4].

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[1] Leslie, John (2000) Our Place in the Cosmos. *Philosophy*, Vol. 75, No. 291. (Jan.), p. 5.
[2] Davies, P. (2001) A Naturalistic Account of the Universe. In Peterson, Michael et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 231.
[3] Hawking, Stephen (1998) *A Brief History of Time*, p.127.
[4] Darwin, Charles (1902) *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Vol. 1, p. 788.

Arguments for God's existence are many. The ontological argument (attributed to Anselm but in fact can be traced to earlier scholars), the argument from design, from experience, from necessity, and from morality, are among the widely cited but they are not the only ones and the fact that each one has been criticized does not make them intrinsically invalid. A naïve theologian or scholar of religion would feel complacent with one or two of these arguments but by doing so he unwittingly does a disservice to proving God's existence. Indeed, as philosopher Richard Swinburne has noticed, "one unfortunate feature of recent philosophy of religion has been a tendency to treat arguments for the existence of God in isolation from each other"[(1)]. Taken together, all worthwhile arguments - arguments which are at least *not* universally invalid - collectively supply ample evidence for God's existence.

Human preoccupation with the question –~~w~~what brought me into existence?" has never diminished nor has any profound question of the sort become insipid or banal. They just keep pressing. Atheists are no exception here. Why? Because atheists are not born atheists and they know this about themselves. Their conscious decision to renounce religion and choose atheism only happens at a later stage in their lives. The atheist, in reality, does not discover the absence of God by nature, nor by honest logical reflection, but rather discovers the need for God and then violently strives to crush it at any cost or just struggle to ignore its nagging effects.

Each time the atheist is confronted with a natural interest in absolute values, unconditioned standards, or with some metaphysical anxiety, he will discover in himself vestiges of transcendence which have not yet been abolished. His mission is to get rid of them. The very existence of God is a perpetual

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[(1)] Swinburne, Richard (2004) *The Existence of God*, Oxford University Press, p. 12.

threat to him[1]. "The atheist's case, therefore, is not a case of practical forgetting, but a case of deeper and deeper commitment to refusal and fight"[2]. He is bound ceaselessly to struggle against God, and to change, to recast everything in himself and in the world not on the basis of atheism but (more accurately) on the basis of a personal devotion to anti-theism[3]. The Quran pithily describes the atheist's relation to Allah:

> "...And the disbeliever has always been an ally against his Rabb (creator, sustainer)"[4].

Atheism can be seen as an aberration, an anomaly, a deliberate deviation from human nature, whereas theism (or religious experience in general) hardly falls short of being viewed as a cosmic magnet which attracts the human psyche towards its center[5]. This is why we hardly ever encounter children - even before being exposed to any form of religious education - with pronounced proclivities towards atheism. What we find actually is a child who is passionately curious about the origin of things, who is naturally prepared to entertain the idea of creation without resistance. Resistance or atheism, like any form of religious indoctrination, is something that develops later.

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[1] *A New Approach to God, in our Emergent Civilization*, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harpers, 1947), p. 292.
[2] *Ibid*.
[3] Maritain, Jacques (1949) On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul.), p. 267-268.
[4] Quran: 25:55.
[5] Antony Flew (1923), the famous British philosopher, was a strong proponent of atheism and argued that we should presuppose God's inexistence until evidence of God was found. However, it was not long before he renounced atheism and returned to belief in God. His final views appeared in the controversial book *There is A God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, with Roy Abraham Varghese.

James H. Leuba, known for his works in the psychology of religion, explains:

"Many persons have observed with surprise the apparition in young children of the problem of creation. A child notices a curiously-shaped stone, and asks who made it. He is told that it was formed in the stream by the water. Then, suddenly, he throws out, in quick succession, questions that are as much exclamations of astonishment as queries, 'Who made the stream, who the mountain, who the earth?' The necessity of a Maker is, no doubt, borne in upon the savage at a very early time"[(1)].

Had atheism been the normal state of affairs, had it been people's inalienable right to embrace atheism, the very idea of a Creator would have been utterly inconceivable[(2)]. For the evolutionary atheist[(3)], it is indeed a baffling paradox that Darwinian evolution should produce intelligent beings with firm creationist/theistic tendencies.

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(1) Leuba, James H. (1909) *The Psychological Origin and the Nature of Religion*. Bryn Mawr College, USA, p. 41. **An important point** is worth raising here. Contrary to atheists' claim that children are born lacking in fine conceptual religious apprehensions which are only later transmitted to them through cultural habituation, some studies have shown that children do possess subtle conceptual discriminatory abilities in matters of faith before being exposed to formal systematic indoctrination. Justin L. Barrett, a well-known evolutionary anthropologist, recounts that "regarding God's creative power, preschoolers appear to be capable of understanding that God creates natural things but not artifacts, whereas humans create artifacts but not natural things" (Barrett, J. L. (2000) Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* – (Jan.), Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 30). This observation will have vital implications for arguments from Design later in this book.

(2) This may count as an ontological argument for God's existence. Although it has been attacked by several philosophers, it is more rational than to assert otherwise.

(3) An evolutionary atheist is someone who rejects the existence of a Creator and believes that life has evolved from primeval physicochemical processes.

Agnosticism, the individual's refusal to pass judgements on God's existence, is a potential springboard for atheism. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Christian Theology*, "by saying of God that he has no existence for thought] i.e. agnosticism [, there is also a possibility of denying him any kind of existence at all. Historically, it is the affinities between agnosticism and atheism that have prevailed"[(1)]. Essentially, an agnostic is a person who is either trying to be indifferent to God's existence or a person who gratuitously subscribes to the proposition that God's existence is altogether disprovable. One common denominator, however, among almost all agnostics is the skeptic mindset.

The Quran treats such scepticism with a succession of profound rhetorical questions:

> "Were they (people) created by nothing? Or are they the creators? Or did they create the heavens and earth? Nay, they do not truly believe"[(2)].

Failure to answer these questions in the affirmative entails the following corollary: there is no reason why our existence should be more necessary than the existence of a Creator.

> "Have you not seen that Allah has created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He wills, He can remove you and bring about a new creation"[(3)].

Two realizations orient our being towards a level of reality that is beyond our material world. First, the fact that we are mortal creatures living in a transient world; second, the pressing feeling that life has a purpose. Had not this been the case, our earthly striving, our collective endeavour, our very

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(1) Secretan, P. (2005) Agnosticism. In *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, edited by Jean-Yves Lacoste, Routledge, p. 15-16.
(2) Quran: 52: 35-36.
(3) Quran: 16:19.

identities, would have become bereft of meaning. In our journey to find the One Ultimate Reality, the Truth of all truths, we are continuously reminded to observe the signs (*Ayaat*s) which abound in three major realms:

1. The **realm of the self.**
2. The **realm of earth**.
3. The **realm of the heavens**.

"And on earth are signs for those who have true faith. And in yourselves, will you not then see?"[1].

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alteration of night and day, there are signs for people of understanding"[2].

In the latter verse, only the 'people of understanding' are best suited to benefit from the *Ayaat* (signs) of Allah[3]. Elsewhere in the Quran, only cattle-like people refuse to profit from the signs of truth.

"They have hearts with which they understand not, and they have eyes with which they see not, and they have ears with which they hear not. They are like cattle, nay even more astray. Those! They are the heedless ones"[4].

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[1] Quran: 51: 21-22.
[2] Quran: 3: 190.
[3] After a thorough study of the Quran and its compatibility with modern science, Dr. Zakir Naik counted "more than six thousand 'Signs' in the Qur'an of which more than a thousand deals with hardcore science". (Naik, Zakir, *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible*?, p. 5, (undated) , published by Islamic Research Foundation)
[4] Quran: 7: 179. "Hearts" in the verse is a literal translation of the Arabic word 'quloob', the plural of 'qalb'. The Arabic word connotes an extra sense not suggested by its English equivalent. The 'qalb' is sometimes used as a synonym of 'Fu'ad', the locus of understanding and comprehension.

In order to join the *people-of-understanding* community, we need to first cast aside our pride and acknowledge our weaknesses. Humbleness, as opposed to self-conceit, enables man to see his flaws and sustains his quest for more knowledge and wisdom. As one quote goes, "our strength grows out of our weaknesses"[(1)]. The lesson here is that narcissism and self-conceit, being the usual by-products of arrogance, only blunt the mind, dumb the senses and make the individual blind to signs that are as manifest as sunlight in the middle of a clear sky.

Earlier, we saw two sources of knowledge in Islam: conceptual and physical knowledge. Both sources, when correctly established, can lead man to firm religious convictions, including the necessary truth that God exists. Two examples can be cited in this regard. The first is Rene Descartes, the French philosopher and mathematician. Descartes promoted a rationalistic deductive method which involved reasoning out a general law from specific cases. His work eventually led him to accept the existence of God[(2)]. Nearly a century later, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant ascribed a significant role to 'human intuition'. He also believed that the human need to attain optimum morality necessitated belief in divine justice. Like his predecessor, Kant reached the conclusion that faith and intuition can lead to an understanding of spiritual truths, including the existence of God[(3)].

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(1) Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803-1882).

(2) Vault, Birdsall S. (1990) *Western Civilization Since 1600*, p. 61-62.

(3) The case of the Indian mathematician known as a Ramanujan is a glaring proof of the fact that people are born equipped with powerful intuitions. **The reason why** I cite this story is to show that formal modes of education can be counterproductive (Aristotle's tedious syllogisms could have perverted Ramanujan's pristine mind!). And secondly, that unsullied intuition can lead to real facts and genuine conclusions. Although Ramanujan, according to Paul Davies (1992), lived isolated from mainstream education and approached mathematics in a very unconventional manner, he effortlessly managed to come up

The Quran not only establishes the existence of God as necessary, but also invites the people to examine this belief intellectually and subject it to logical verification.

> "Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and on the earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not"[(1)].

> "And He has made the sun and the moon, both constantly pursuing their courses, to be of service to you; and He has made the night and day, to be of service to you; and provided you with all what you have asked for"[(2)].

Here, Chittick recapitulates:

"The Quran keeps on telling Muslims, —Will you not reflect, will you not ponder, will you not think?" About what? About the signs, which are found, as over two hundred Quranic verses remind us, in everything, especially natural phenomena. It does not take a great scientist or any scientist at all, to understand that the world speaks loudly of the majesty of its Creator"[(3)].

Before drawing to a close, we need to address Darwinian evolution for a moment. For atheistic evolutionists, God is supplanted by the laws of evolution. The assertion that life solely emerges from the action of chaotic evolutionary

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with astounding theorems, the proof of which required the collective genius of professionally trained mathematicians (See Davies, P. (1992) *The Mind of God: Science & the Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Penguin, p. 153-54).

(1) Quran: 100: 101.

(2) Quran: 14: 32-34. *Commentators* on this verse, such as the prominent Andalusian scholar Ibn-Attiyah, said the meaning was that Allah had provided human beings with all 'that is necessary' for their survival and well-being (Ibn-Attyiah (2007) *Al-Muhararul-Wajeez*, Qatar, Vol. 5, p. 252).

(3) Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 12.

mechanisms, which in themselves lack intelligence, is a flagrant contradiction. The works and inventions of humankind bring this contradiction to its fullest manifestation. No purely material force has ever built or can build and set in motion a nuclear accelerator, a train, or even a simple wheel[1]. Psychologically, attributing design to pure chance only indicates "a chaotic state of mind analogous to the physical chaos which makes its epiphany betwixt [*sic*] the destruction of an old world and the creation of a new", criticized John Blackie[2].

According to the Quran, the existence of the Creator is a logical necessity: *"How can there be any doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and earth?"*[3]. Everything else is temporal and could have failed to exist; as for the Creator *"He is the First and the Last"*[4]. Hence, the question "Who created God?" is logically invalid. As Dr. Jonathan Sarfati[5] puts it, "God by definition is the uncreated Creator of the universe, so the question "Who created God?" is illogical, just like "To whom is the bachelor married?"[6]. William L. Craig reaffirms, "God, who never began to exist, requires no cause, whereas the universe, which did spring into being out of nothing a finite time ago, does"[7].

Having acknowledged this, it should be borne in mind that no genuine religious discussion may take place without 'God' at its heart. Nicely put by John S. Blackie, professor of Greek at Edinburgh University:

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[1] Barrows, H.D. (1904) *Cosmos or Chaos? Theism, or Atheism?* Los Angeles, p. 12.
[2] Blackie, J. (1878*) The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p.3.
[3] Quran: 10: 14.
[4] Quran: 57:1-3.
[5] Dr. Jonathan Sarfati is an Australian physical chemist.
[6] Sarfati, Jonathan (1998) *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal,* 12 (1): 20-22.
[7] Craig, William L. (1986) God, Creation and Mr. Davies. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (June), p 169.

"Talking of religion without God is as meaningless as talking of the propositions in Euclid without the postulates on which they depend"[1].

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[1] Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 111.

Which is God?

> "When people do not know what God is, it is easy for them to fall into the habit of worshiping false gods".
>
> (William C. Chittick)[1]

It is not the question "Does God exist?" but the question "Who or What is God?" that has troubled the minds of millions since time immemorial. Truly, never has there been a subject of greater controversy than that of trying to know the Attributes of the Creator: is He the Judaic Jehovah? Is He the Christian Godhead? Is He the Greek Zeus, Jupiter, Hera, and Juno? Is He the Hindu Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva? Is He the stones, trees, animals, and idols of the pagans? Is He Darwin's evolution? Or is He the abstract and indefinite God of the philosophers or Aristotle's Prime Mover? Indeed, in the absence of authentic revelation, God could virtually mean anything.

> "Yet of mankind are those who dispute about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening Book (revelation)"[2].

Let us now set out on a short journey to find the one true Creator. First, we'll need to see how God is conceived from three major standpoints: the philosophical, the Judeo-Christian, and the non-monotheistic. After that, we'll address the concept of God in Islam and see how it provides the most coherent and rational concept of God.

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[1] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 29.
[2] Quran: 31:20.

The Philosophical Concept of God

Broadly speaking, God is conceived in philosophical discourse as taking no notice of mundane events; he has not created the world, and does not judge his creatures at the end of time[1]. It is clear from the beginning that the God of the philosophers is not the God of revelation: of the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran. According to Georg Picht, philosophers conceive God as "the truth of being in its unity and its self-sustaining nature"; that is the "truth of the being of this world"[2].To philosophers, God is a non-personal, featureless, nondescript, and abstract entity. Some philosophers went as far as to say, "God is, in the last analysis, utterly unknowable"[3]. By totally mystifying our conception of God, philosophers thought, and obscuring the meaning of His Attributes, many disputes and differences could be ironed out. Sorry to say, their attempts have only added insult to injury. What is it other than *philosophizing* about God that has deepened the rifts of controversy from the times of ancient Greece up to our present day?

The value of philosophy as a way of understanding reality has been questioned in the social as well as the natural sciences. Bertrand Russell, although a stout defender of philosophy, himself viewed metaphysics, a major branch of philosophy, as bearing "no sort of relation to the world of experience…an empty abstraction, from which no single

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[1] Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 204.
[2] Picht, G. (1980) The God of the Philosophers. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (March), p. 78. Oxford University Press.
[3] Kaufman, Gordon (2001) On Thinking of God as a Serendipitous Creativity. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* June, Vol. 69, No. 2, p. 413.

inference can be validly made as to the world of appearance, in which world, nevertheless, all our interests lie"[1].

When it comes to God and his Attributes, philosophy becomes sheer guesswork or, at best, an intellectual torture and brain-racking endeavour. According to the Quran, this is a territory where mere conjecture is utterly futile:

> "And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Certainly, conjecture can be of no avail against the truth. Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what they do"[2].

As Professor Dewey correctly assessed, philosophy is "a discipline whose boundaries cannot be neatly marked off"[3].

To conclude this part, it might come as a surprise to some that atheistic philosophers have also developed their own concept of God. In his provocative *Beyond the Hoax*, mathematician and physicist Alan Sokal relates how the modern scientific worldview has led not to a denial of God but, instead, to adopting a pan-spiritualism that disperses God everywhere[4]. One caution deserves mention here, although it will be addressed later in more detail, and that is the fact that one of the gravest errors is to base our concept of God on our fallible and changing interpretations of science, be they modern, classical, or ancient. By doing so, God ceases to become an independent and unique reality. Rather, He becomes a social construct, a cultural entity that develops through history in the minds of generations. In short, He becomes a figment of the mind wherein humans find solace across the ages, and this is exactly what myth is about.

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(1) Russell, Bertrand (2004) *Why Am I Not a Christian? And other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects.* Routledge Classics, p. 52.
(2) Quran: 10:36.
(3) James, W. (1911) *Some Problems of Philosophy*, Longmans, p. 6.
(4) Sokal, Alan (2008) *Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy, and Culture*, Oxford University Press, p. 347.

The Concept of God in Christianity

Douglas K. Blount once candidly put it:

"The doctrine which more than any other sets Christianity apart from other types of theism is the doctrine of the Incarnation, according to which Jesus Christ is God"[(1)].

The vast majority of Christian denominations have come to accept the Trinity Doctrine as the common baseline. The Trinity doctrine goes back to the Athanasian Creed[(2)], held today by the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox churches and a vast majority of Protestant denominations. The mainstream concept of God in Christianity is a compound one: three in one and one in three, all three are distinct, yet all three are one. Although Christianity claims adherence to monotheism, the triune Godhead cannot but make room for three distinct divinities: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit[(3)].

Dr. Wm. Sherlock, in his *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity,* thus states:

"That the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three infinite minds, really distinct from each other; that the Father is not the *Son* nor the Holy Ghost either the Father or the Son is so very plain"[(4)].

But Sherlock was only relating an existing theology and his own view regarding the Trinity can be inferred from his other statement:

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(1) Blount, Douglas K. (2002) On the Incarnation of a Timeless God. In *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. Edited by Gregory E. Ganssle & David M. Woodruff; Oxford University Press. p.12.

(2) After St. Athanasius (*circa* 293-373), the Alexandrian pope who rejected the idea that Jesus was of a distinct substance from the Father and promoted the belief that Jesus was the Son of God, which later developed into the Trinity doctrine.

(3) See a logical analysis of the Trinity doctrine at the end of this book.

(4) Wilson, Join (1864) *Unitarian Principles Confirmed by Trinitarian Testimonies: Being Selections from the Works of Eminent Theologians Belonging to Orthodox Churches*, Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, p. 281.

"*God* is the name of a being absolutely perfect; and the light of nature teaches us that there is but one such Supreme Being, or but one God; but nature does not teach us that there are three divine persons, who are this one God"[1].

The Christian concept of God is extremely problematic. Ever since the Nicene Creed was formulated[2], Christians' bitterest contention was about the nature of Jesus, and whether he was human, divine or perhaps a combination[3]. According to one view, one that was proclaimed by Melchior Hoffman, Jesus is considered to be a single and separate divinity born through Mary but without taking of her substance[4]. A second view, one preached by Menno Simons, portrays Jesus as having less supernatural qualities but still possessing attributes of a divine nature[5]. Casper Schwenckfeld went as far as to proclaim the belief that Jesus was an eternal divinity in human flesh[6]. John Campanus further claimed that God and Jesus were of "one substance and one common essence *(wesen)*"[7].

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[1] *Ibid*: p. 378.

[2] After the Council of Nicaea, where an assembly of bishops was called by Emperor Constantine in 325 to lay down the foundations of the Christian creed.

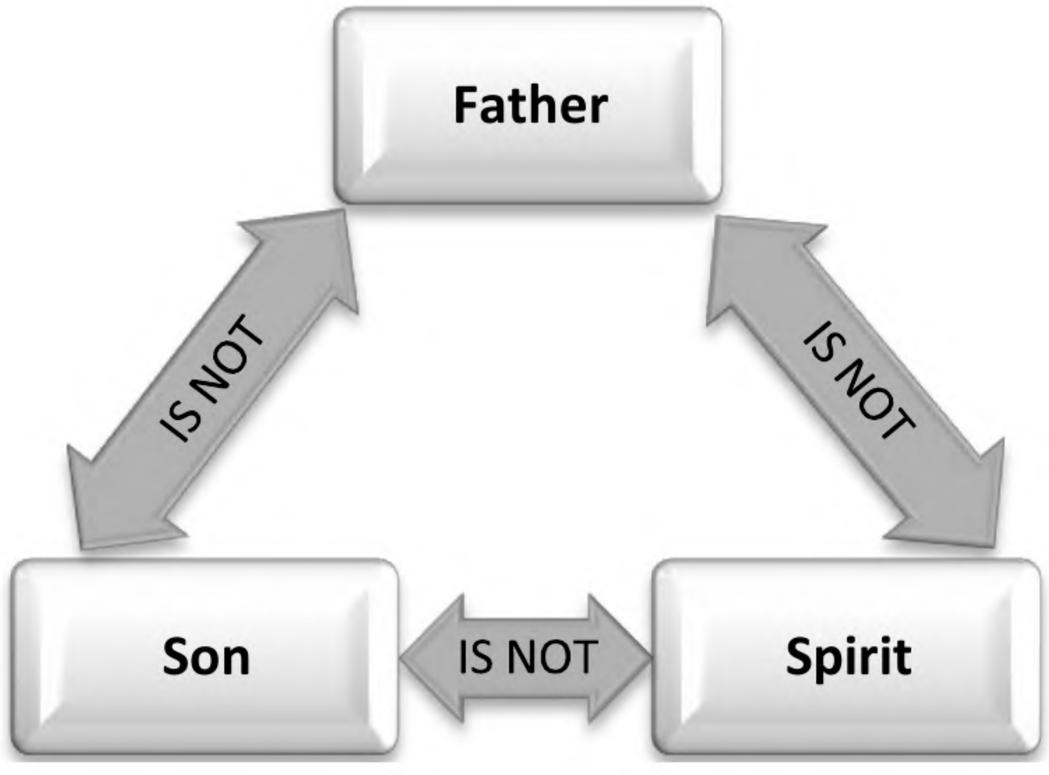
[3] Guthrie, Gary D. (1997) *The Wisdom Tree: A Journey to the Heart of God*, Ocean Tree Books, p. 11..

[4] Irwin, Joyce (1978) Embryology and the Incarnation: A Sixteenth-Century Debate. *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Autumn), p. 93-94.

[5] *Ibid*: p.94.

[6] E. J. Furcha (1968) Key Concepts in Caspar von Schwenckfeld's Thought: Regeneration and the New Life. *Church History*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Jun), p.171. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History.

[7] MacCormick, Chalmers (1963) The "Anti-Trinitarianism" of John Campanus. *Church History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sept.), p.281. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History.



The problematic Trinity: "Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God"[1]. Yet, each one is held to be distinct from the other.

Several Trinitarian authorities have doubted the Trinity and could not find the evidence that would validate its plausibility. Bishop Tostat had demonstratively put it:

"It is evident, that, from the authorities of the Old Testament, sufficient and clear proof cannot be drawn either for the Trinity or for a plurality of divine persons"[2].

The Concept of God in Judaism

Despite the existence of pagan vestiges[3], Judaism is generally considered a monotheistic religion. According to the Old Testament, no creature or creation may be elevated to the rank of God. In Exodus 20: 4-5, we read:

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[1] Ware, Bruce A. (2005) *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, Crossway Books, Illinois, p.25.

[2] Wilson, Join (1864) *Unitarian Principles Confirmed by Trinitarian Testimonies: Being Selections from the Works of Eminent Theologians Belonging to Orthodox Churches*, Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, p. 334.

[3] See: Neusner, Jacob (1963) on Jewish use of pagan symbols discussed earlier in this book.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them".

In Isaiah 46:9, God is unique and incomparable:

"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me".

However, a perusal of the Old Testament reveals a host of inconsistencies concerning God's identity, including references to flagrant anthropomorphic accounts. Despite Isaiah (46:9) and Exodus (20: 4-5) where God is supreme and unique, other accounts literally speak of God wrestling with Prophet Jacob (Genesis 32:21-32). Another speaks of God resting after fatigue and refreshing Himself (Exodus 31:37)[1]. A third one describes God incapable of driving out the enemies of Judah because they had chariots of iron (Judges 1:19, King James Version). Tracing the roots of the problem at hand, George R. Berry alludes to the fact that the language of revelation (the true words of God) was gradually replaced by folk language in order to render accounts of God and his Attributes accessible to the common man:

"In general, the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament may be accounted for partly on historical grounds, **it being a result of the fact that the writers and speakers used popular language in order to be intelligible to the people of their own times**"[2].

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[1] "…in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed".

[2] Berry, George R. (1901) The Old Testament Teaching Concerning God. *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Apr.) p. 256. Published by: The University of Chicago Press.

This distortion of the scriptures ultimately led to distorting peoples' conception of God. Montefiore, a figure well-known to Jewish scholars, explains:

"For many generations the common belief clearly was that Yahweh (God) had a body and a shape, and this shape was probably conceived as very similar to - only larger and grander than - man's. Traces of this belief, ending up with mere metaphor, are scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible"[(1)].

Another Jewish scholar, Moses Maimonides, frustrated by the extraordinary muddle of anthropomorphic representations, eventually went as far as to say that it was impossible that he (God) should have any affirmative attributes! [(2)].

Non-Monotheistic Concepts

Non-monotheistic religions are sometimes referred to as heathen religions. They are also classified as non-Prophetic religions in order to differentiate them from the three organized Prophetic ones: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Non-monotheistic religions include Aryan religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and pagan worship prevalent in many parts of the world. A characteristic feature of Hinduism is pantheism, the idea that God is not a personality but an omnipresent power united with the physical universe. Although Hinduism is not conventionally regarded as a monotheistic religion, Hindu scriptures contain unequivocal allusions to a belief in one God[(3)]. Consider the following from *Chandogya Upanishad*:

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(1) Brockington, L.H. *The Hebrew Conception of Personality in Relation to the Knowledge of God.* A paper read to the Oxford Society of Historical Theology on 22 November 1945.

(2) Waugh, Alexander (2003) *God*. Review, p.248.

(3) Some figures show Hindus believing in a series of 330 million gods. See *Hinduism and Islam: A Comparative Study*, Murtahin Billah Fazlie, 1997, Saudi Arabia.

"He is One only without a second"[1].

In *Rigveda*, we also read:

"O friends, do not worship anybody but Him, the Divine One"[2].

Lower forms of worship are sometimes associated with existing in societies holding an immature concept of religion. These are societies where pagan mythology is most pervasive. Hellenistic polytheism falls neatly into this category. Historian Charles Seignobos thus wrote:

"The Romans, like the Greeks, believed that everything that occurs in the world was the work of a deity. But in place of a God who directs the whole universe, they had a deity for every phenomenon which they saw. There was a divinity to make the seed sprout, another to protect the bounds of the fields, another to guard the fruits. Each had its name, its sex, and its functions. The principal gods were Jupiter, god of the heaven ; Janus, the two-faced god (the deity who opens); Mars, god of war ; Mercury, god of trade; Vulcan, god of fire; Neptune, god of the sea; Ceres, goddess of grains, the Earth, the Moon, Juno, and Minerva. Below these were secondary deities. Some personified a quality—for example, Youth, Concord, Health, and Peace. Others presided over a certain act in life…In short, there was a veritable legion of minor special Deities"[3].

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[1] Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1.
[2] Rigveda Book 8:1:1.
[3] Seignobos, Charles (1906) *History of Ancient Civilization*, Translated by Arthur Herbert Wilde, New York, p. 208.

The Concept of God in Islam

> "By the nature of the quest, Muslim intellectuals knew from the outset that everything had come from the One and will return to the One".
>
> (William C. Chittick)[1]

The concept of God in Islam entirely hinges upon the logical necessity that God is One; One *in* Himself (i.e. not a Trinity or a physically compound being) and one *by* Himself (i.e. single, unique, without a rival, partner, or counterpart). In Gilbert Reid's appreciation:

"If the Christian doctrine of a Trinity, or the Buddhist and Taoist trinities, are rejected as false, it is because they are viewed as teaching a doctrine of three Gods, three persons, distinct from each other; and here even the orthodox Trinitarian Christian must acknowledge that if in our thought or phraseology or practice we make unto ourselves three distinct persons, each of whom we call God, we betray ourselves into gross error, subverting that which is fundamental and all-essential, the truth that "the Lord our God is one Lord."[2]

In Islam, God is not the nebulous God of philosophers and ultra-mystics, nor is He the nationalistic human-like God of Judaism, nor the compound enigmatic Godhead of Christianity. What we know is that He is real, independent, and the One to whom belongs the Best Names (*Al-Asmaa Al-Husna*). Although He has Attributes (*Sifaat*), such Attributes are unique, in reference to His perfect Self, and resemble

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[1] William C. Chittick (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 51.

[2] Gilbert Reid (1916) Islam, an Appreciation. *The Biblical World,* Vol. 48, No.1, p. 9.

nothing in reality or anything invited in the collective mind of all mankind.

"And nothing is equal to Him"[1].

God in Islam is not the impersonal, excess, and irrelevant god of the deists. Instead, He is directly and emphatically relevant to the universe and human life for He has created everything and therefore fully knows what He has created[2]. He responds to human beings, yet He is The Self-Sufficient (*Al-Ghani*); His actions directly bear on history and human destiny, yet He is The Wise (*Al-Hakeem*), The Subtle (*Al-Lateef*), and above all The Most Lofty (*Al-A'laa*).

"The doctrine concerning God and man's relation to God is cardinal in Islam, and this gives it a distinguished position amongst the religions and theologies of all past time and all peoples", states Reid. "According to the Quran" adds Reid, God is "the Author or Creator of all worlds and is their everlasting Ruler. Islam is thus not deism but pure theism. He is also distinct from the material universe, though an ever-present God and thus Islam is not pantheism but theism"[3].

"They say: "Allah has begotten a son". Glory be to Him! He is The Ghanee (Rich and Self-Sufficient). To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth"[4].

"Truly, nothing is hidden from Allah, whether in earth or in heaven. It is He Who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. None has the right to be worshipped but He, the All Mighty, the All Wise"[5].

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[1] Quran: 112: 4.
[2] Quran: 67:14.
[3] Reid, Gilbert (1916) Islam, an Appreciation. *The Biblical World,* Vol. 48, No.1, p. 9-10.
[4] Quran: 10: 68.
[5] Quran: 3: 5-6.

Islam is both a categorical affirmation and negation. On the one hand, it emphatically affirms God's Oneness and uniqueness and on the other, it categorically rejects all forms of polytheism, paganism, and henotheism[1] as outright falsehoods. Have you ever heard of two kings ruling the same country? Have you ever seen two drivers driving the same car using the same steering wheel? To propose the existence of more than one *true* God is to postulate a self-refuting statement. According to the Quran:

> "Had there been in the heavens or earth gods besides Allah, then, verily, both would have been ruined. Glorified is Allah, the Rabb of the Throne, and far is He from what they attribute to Him!"[2].

> "No offspring did Allah beget, nor is there any god besides Him; otherwise each god would have got away with what he had created, and each one would have tried to conquer the other! Glorified is Allah above all that they attribute to Him!"[3].

Huston Smith, considered by many as the most influential world authority on comparative religion, informatively recapitulates:

"We must immediately add that Muslims see monotheism as Islam‘s contribution not simply to the Arabs but to religion in its entirety. Hinduism‘s prolific images are taken as proof that it never arrived at the worship of the single God. Judaism was correctly instructed through its *Shema*—”Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”—but its teachings were confined to the people of Israel. Christians, for their part, compromised their monotheism by deifying Christ. Islam honors Jesus as a prophet and accepts his virgin birth; Adam‘s

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[1] As defined earlier, henotheism is the worship of one God while believing in the existence of other gods.
[2] Quran: 21: 22.
[3] Quran: 23: 91.

and Jesus‘ souls are the only two that God created directly. The Koran draws the line at the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Trinity, however, seeing these as inventions that blur the Divine/human distinction"[1].

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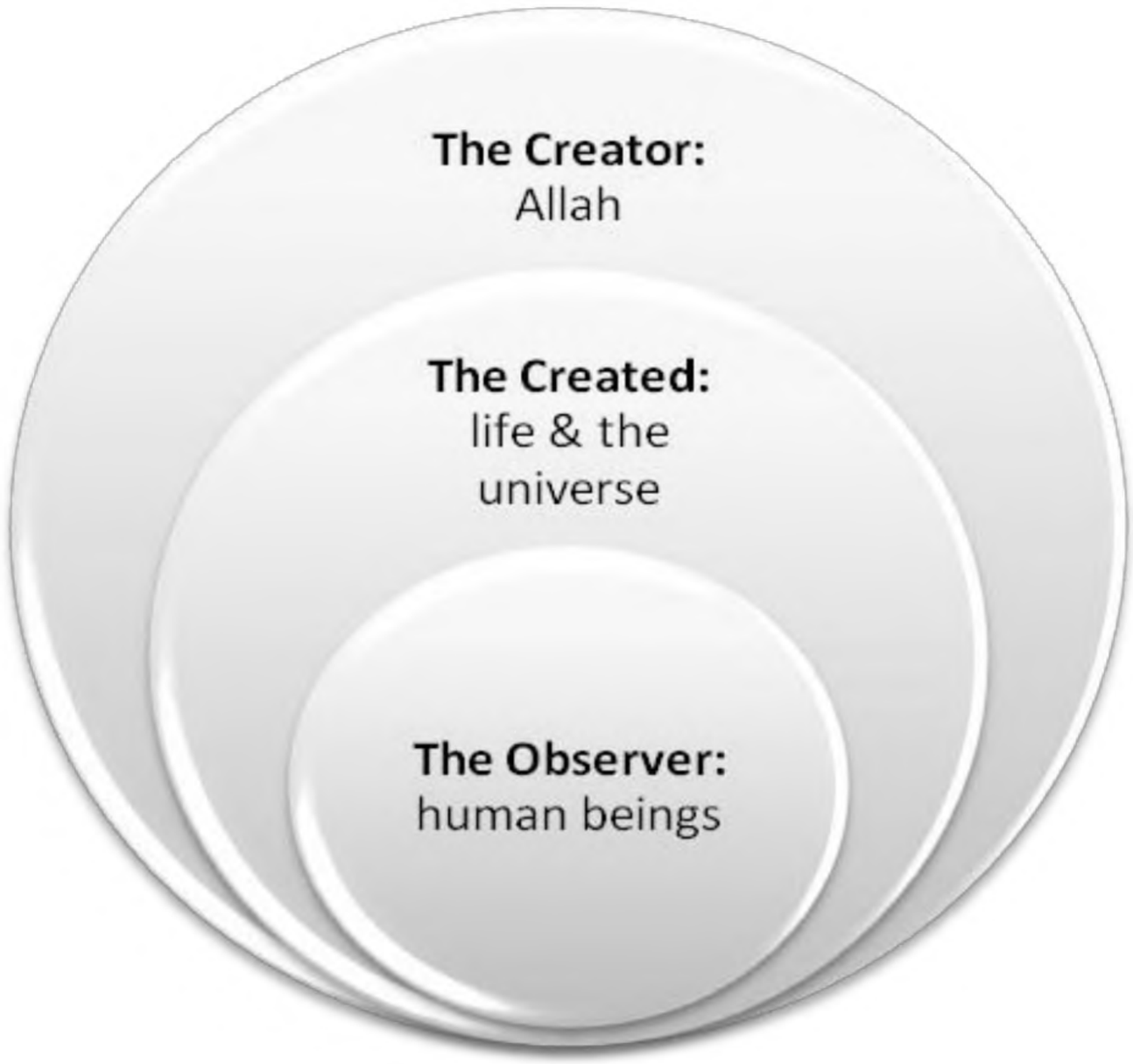
[1] Smith, Huston (2001) *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, HarperCollins, p. 34.



Disbelief and atheism result from misunderstanding the Creator, the Created, the Observer, or the nature of the relation among the three. In Islam, the above three tiers of existence are conceptually interconnected. Misunderstanding at any tier will necessarily impact our conceptualization of the other two. For example, underestimating the observer (i.e. the human being), as in futilitarian existential philosophies, leads to an underestimation of life or the universe (i.e. the created) thereby leading to an underestimation or denial of the Creator's existence. When Darwin misunderstood the nature of life - for Darwin the world was a habitat of much misery - he instantly developed worrying misconceptions about Allah (i.e. the Creator) and the worth of human beings (i.e. the Observer). When Christians viewed human beings as bearers of an Original Sin, the Creator and life were brought into question. When philosophers conceived of the Creator as having no concern with morality, human beings were pushed to the margins. One may think of more examples using this simple model.

God's Lineage

When the belligerent pagans of Arabia accosted Prophet Muhammad and asked him to mention God's lineage, the Quran answered their request in chapter 112:

> "Say: He is Allah, The One and Only. Allah, Assamad. He did not beget, nor was He begotten. And nothing is equal to Him"[(1)].

The chapter starts with the most distinctive Attribute and that is God's *proper name*. The 'proper name' of God in Islam - which the famous Arab grammarian Sebawaih calls "the most proper name of all proper names" - is '**Allah**'. In linguistics, a 'proper name' is a noun which represents a unique entity. 'Allah' is therefore a name exclusively reserved for the One true God and no deity or entity may qualify as to share in the uniqueness of this very noun. The word 'god', by contrast, is a *common name*, not a proper one. Linguistically, the term 'common name' is used to describe a class of entities. Therefore, the word 'God' – even though capitalized - is not unique[(2)]. We can gain a fuller appreciation of the name 'Allah' as opposed to 'God' through simple comparison. The name 'Allah' is genderless and has no plural form whereas 'god' can be pluralized (gods), feminized (goddess), and capitalized (God) to avoid confusion with the lower false 'gods'.

The second fundamental Attribute is *Ahad*, meaning the One and Only, thus emphasizing Allah's absolute uniqueness and singularity. The third distinctive Attribute is *Assamad* which, although difficult to translate, roughly means the One who is absolutely independent, perfect, and self-sufficient. Therefore, all existence is dependent upon Him, because He

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(1) Quran: 112:1-4.

(2) Deciding God's proper name in Christianity is really problematic. Is it Jesus, Father, or Holy Spirit? Or is it the sum of the three altogether?

is free of all needs, including the need to have progeny or lineage i.e. *He did not beget nor was He begotten*, hence the answer to the pagans' question above. *Assamad* also means the One who is not hollow[1]. This entails that He is *incorruptible* because all created entities are hollow with respect to their dependence or lack of self-sufficiency. All created entities are thus intrinsically corruptible. Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz further explain:

"To say that a being is incorruptible is to say that it has its perfections necessarily or essentially. In other words, it has its perfections in every possible world in which it exists. Evidently, all other things being equal, such a being is greater than one which is corruptible, i.e., that could fail to have one or more of its perfections or great-making qualities…As we have seen, maximal greatness entails incorruptibility. So, necessarily, if God exists, then he is incorruptible"[2].

The chapter concludes with a *generic negation*, disqualifying all false gods for He (Allah) has no equivalent, rival, or counterpart of any kind.

A crucial feature of *generic negation* is its brevity and inclusiveness. As we'll see, generic negation solves the problems arising from 'negative theology', a concept that will be addressed very shortly. An example of the use of generic negation is the last verse of chapter 112:

"There is nothing equal to Him".

And the eleventh verse of chapter 42:

"Nothing whatsoever resembles Him".

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[1] Al-Andalusi, Abi-Hayaan (2001) *Tafsir Al-Bahrul Muheet*, Dar-ul-Kutbu il-Ilmiyah, Vol. 8, p. 530.
[2] Hoffman, J. and Rosenkrantz, G. (2002) *The Divine Attributes*, Blackwell Publishers, p. 18-19, 107.

On the other hand, when affirming Allah's perfection, we should elaborate our affirmation of the Attributes of perfection and specify them. Verses 22-24 from chapter 59 provide an example:

> "He is Allah; there is no god but He, the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassioante. He is Allah; there is no god but He, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Far is Allah above what they associate as partners with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Designer. To Him belong the Best Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise".

'Generic Negation' and 'Elaborate Affirmation' are two vital notions in Islam. The former comprehensively negates all false attributes and imperfections. The latter is an elaborate affirmation of the Attributes, yet only the Attributes spelt out in the Quran or Sunnah. When referring to Allah's Attributes, the following ruling should be considered:

'Observe generic negation when negating imperfections and elaborate affirmation when affirming perfection'.

Some other theologies have fallen prey to *negative theology*, the act of describing Allah in terms of what He *is not* rather than what He *is*. It reverses the Islamic formula of *generic negation* and *detailed affirmation*. In negative theology, the scholar, theologian, or philosopher would elaborate negation and generalize (or altogether avoid) affirmation. Just to give you a clue about the tedious and never-ending task of negative theology, a theologian would say something like 'God is not a stone', 'not an object', 'not the universe', 'not a human being', 'not nature'…and because God is infinitely unique, the list of negations will also continue ad infinitum.

The doctrine of negative theology seriously falls short of providing a definite appreciation of Allah's Attributes. The doctrine originated from an overreaction to intolerable theological misconceptions. Alexander Waugh cites the case of Thomas Aquinas:

"Thomas Aquinas, the architect of Christian theology, also ran into the same error. The New Testament, containing mass contradictions concerning God's identity, forced Aquinas to iterate: "We cannot know what God is, but only what He is not, so we must consider the ways in which He is not rather the ways in which He is""[(1)].

Because it is impossible, relying on reason alone, to know for certain what Allah is not, negative theology (i.e. *elaborate negation*) inevitably becomes an arbitrary and inordinately time-consuming task. Consider, for example, Douglas Clyde's laborious definition of God:

"**No** physical thing, organic or inorganic, is God. **Neither** is the sum total of all physical things God. In other words, what we mean by the term "God" is something different from each and every physical thing, whether taken separately or all together, as the physical universe. **Neither** "my real self" **nor** "my ideal self" is God. However intimately God may be

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(1) Waugh, Alexander (2003) *God*. Review, p. 249.

related to me, God is God and I am I…**No** other human person, historic or contemporary, is God. **Neither** are all human persons, past, present, and future, taken together as "humanity" God. Humanity is to be served, not worshiped; it is not even necessarily to be obeyed. Moreover, all humanity is together dependent upon an Other. **No** mere idea in man's mind is God. **Not** even the God-idea is God, any more than a starving man's idea of bread is bread. **No** ideal, as such, **nor** any other abstraction, is God. **Neither** is the totality of human ideals God"[1].

….the definition is a very tedious one and the list of negations can go on forever. The Islamic formula of *generic negation* succinctly does the job:

> "There is nothing equal to Him"[2].
>
> "Nothing whatsoever resembles Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer"[3].

The benefit we get from understanding Allah's Attributes is priceless. "When people do not know what God is", argues Chittick "it is easy for them to fall into the habit of worshiping false gods, and that leaves them with no protection against the *takthır*]i.e. setting up many gods[of the modern world, the multiplicity of gods that modern ways of thinking demand that they serve"[4].

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[1] Macintosh, D. Clyde (1926) The Meaning of God in Modern Religion, *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 6, No. 5. p. 457-458.
[2] Quran: 112: 4.
[3] Quran: 42: 11.
[4] The Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 16.

God: Personal or Non-Personal?

"The idea of a personal God seems to give people more trouble now than it used to", remarks Huston Smith in his bestseller *Why Religion Matters*. Indeed, many people have wrestled with the question of whether there can be a God who is at the same time personal and ineffable, definable and indescribable. Why do some people have trouble with the notion of a personal God? Smith answers, "Because the concept cloys for sounding anthropomorphic"[(1)].

Albert Einstein and Spinoza, for example, are well-known for rejecting the idea of a personal God, especially the ultra-anthropomorphic images inferred from the Old Testament, wherein God is portrayed as a wrathful capricious old man, who wrestles with Jacob and fails to drive out the enemies of Judah. In mainstream Christianity, God - or some part of God! - is not only hardly distinguishable from humans, but actually appears in human flesh, partakes in a Last Supper, socializes with the people, is persecuted and finally crucified. If this is what 'personal' means, then no doubt Einstein, Spinoza, their followers, and predecessors have a case and their aversion to a personal account of God may be justified on such grounds. Still, their stance does not solve the problem. The negative phrase 'non-personal' is open to many interpretations, all of which are problematic. For example, Anthony C. Thiselton points out that a non-personal God is necessarily "uncharacterizable"[(2)]; He is "neither personal nor transcendent"[(3)]; and if God is not personal, it follows that He is amoral (i.e. indifferent to matters of morality). Consequently, humans will find difficulty relating to Him

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(1) Smith, Huston (2000) *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, HarperCollins, p. 222.
(2) Thiselton, Anthony C. (2002) *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, Oneworld Publications, p. 292.
(3) *Ibid*.

because He would not hear our prayers, He would not know what we are up to, and would never care about the evil going on in this world.

Physicist John D. Barrow, in his book *Impossibility: the Limits of Science and the Science of Limits,* promotes two views that are in line with the Sunni Islamic understanding of Allah's (God's) Attributes.

First, Barrow treats "negative theology" as an example of 'awkward balancing'. This is true according to Sunni Muslim scholars (Sunnis are those who sincerely adhere to the way of the Prophet) because they view 'negative theology' as an overreaction to the other *extreme* view where Allah is hardly distinguishable from a human giant.

Second, Barrow subscribes to the view that Allah being infinite does not preclude us from comprehending the meaning of infinity. This too coincides with the Sunni Muslim view that Allah's Attributes are both fathomless and comprehensible because the two notions address two distinct, yet related, domains. One domain has to do with the limits of divine greatness and nobility, and this is the fathomless part while the other has to do with comprehending the meaning of a given Attribute, and this is not impossible. In a nutshell, we can comprehend the meaning of a given Attribute, but we can neither grasp the actualness of its nature nor the limits of its grandeur. John Barrow, like many learned scientists, sees no incompatibility between the meaning of infinity and the human ability to understand that meaning. Likewise, he sees no incompatibility between envisaging God as infinitely great and the human ability to understand what 'infinitely great' means. In summary, he wrote:

"There is an interesting historical example of the *awkward balancing* act that is needed to think about limits of thought. Ancient philosophers and theologians used to struggle in their quest to talk about concepts like that of 'God', and there emerged a tradition of 'negative theology' which maintained

that God transcended all descriptions. He was defined in terms of all the things that he was not: incomprehensible, atemporal] i.e. not related to time[, and so forth. *One can see that this might be dangerous ground, for even to maintain that God is incomprehensible is to express a fact about God.* To say that God is infinite seemed to be a way of ensuring that he possessed superhuman characteristics, but why can we not comprehend infinities? The natural numbers 1, 2,3,4,5...are an unending infinite sequence, but this hardly renders them incomprehensible to us"[(1)].

The prominent Islamic scholar Ibnul-Qayim Al-Jowziyah, following his mentor Ibn-Taimiyyah, maintained that categorical rejection of a personal God is the result of clinging to a false premise, the premise that ascribing the same attribute to two different entities necessarily cancels the distinctive features unique to each of these two entities[(2)]. However, this is untenable for the reason that the one and same attribute (e.g. knowledge) acquires different realities when attributed to different entities. When we say, for example, that human beings are 'intelligent' and also say that dolphins are 'intelligent', we are speaking of the same attribute (intelligence) but not of the same entity because, it goes without saying, human beings are radically different from dolphins and far exceed the latter in their sophistication of consciousness. Similarly, when we say that Allah 'knows' and John 'knows' we are linguistically referring to an attribute that characterizes two distinct realties: Allah's knowledge is infinite, all-encompassing, and perfect while john's knowledge is finite, limited, and imperfect; Allah's knowledge does not originate from certain biochemical processes or genetically inherited mechanisms while John's knowledge may.

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(1) Barrow, John D. (1998) *Impossibility: the Limits of Science and the Science of Limits,* Oxford University Press, p. 191 (emphasis mine).
(2) Al-Jowziyah, Ibnul-Qayim (2008) *Tareequl-Hijratain*, Published by A'alamul Fawaid, Saudi Arabia , Vol. 2, p. 514-515.

So, let us get to the bottom of this and ask: does God have an identity? The Islamic answer is a resounding 'yes'. However, the definition is short and simple. According to the Quran, Allah is the most unique One (*Al-Wahid*). By 'One' we mean He exists as a distinct indivisible entity, and by 'unique' we mean nothing resembles Him (Quran: 42: 11) for He alone qualifies as the highest Archetype, *Al-Mathalul A'laa* (Quran: 30:27)[1]. Allah has an identity which human beings can relate to. He possess an identity that makes Him maximally great, morally admirable, and maximally worthy of worship[2]. These latter considerations are logically interrelated. Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz explain:

"It also seems that a morally admirable being is maximally worthy of worship only if that being possibly understands acts of worship, for example, prayers for good health, or requests for divine forgiveness. Yet, because Spinoza's God necessarily lacks a unitary personality, it necessarily fails to understand or respond to an act of worship…Thus, an impersonal being of this kind is amoral]i.e. having no moral Attributes such as justice and mercy[, and does not seem to be as worthy of moral admiration"[3].

"To be religiously available", says Smith "God must resemble us in some ways or we could not relate to Him. Yet

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[1] Some translations of the Quran do not give an accurate rendering of the phrase *Mathalul A'laa*, which in my estimation is best translated as 'archetype'.

[2] Another mistake made by classical theology (e.g. Augustine as well as some unconventional sects in Islam) is depicting Allah as being 'impassable'. The ones who suggested this attribute did not mean that God was emotionless, that is lacking in emotions which resemble human emotions, for they were well aware of this. Rather, they meant that God cannot and should not relate to human emotions or respond to them in any manner; that He does not love merciful people or hate cruel ones. In effect, human experience, according to this view, is either completely unintelligible to Allah or Allah is completely indifferent to – although fully knowing of – human experience.

[3] Hoffman, J. and Rosenkrantz, G. (2002) *The Divine Attributes*, Blackwell Publishers, p. 35.

too much like us, God ceases to evoke the reverence and awe that are required for worship. Likeness and difference - both are required; and at their best, they work together in counterpoint". Allah and we posses attributes of love, mercy, kindness, wisdom, and knowledge but God's attributes, notes Huston, "exceed ours infinitely in nobility"[1].

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[1] Smith, Huston (2000) *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, HarperCollins, p. 221-222. **I must note that Huston is not totally right**. From the Islamic perspective, Allah's Attributes not only infinitely exceed ours in nobility but also differ from ours in nature. In other words, we are capable of comprehending their meanings but still fail to grasp their nature in reality. This useful distinction between 'meaning' and 'reality' is a hallmark of Sunni Islam.

God's Proper Name

There is the misunderstanding that ‗Allah' is the God of the Arabs or the God of that part of the map called the 'Islamic world'[1]. Before rectification, let us consult two popular English dictionaries. According to *Collins English Dictionary*, Allah is: ―the name of God in Islam"[2]. The *Thorndike Barnhart Dictionary* offers a similar definition: ―The Moslem name of the one Supreme Being, or God"[3]. As you can see, there is no reference, implicit or explicit, to an Arab God. F.E. Peters clarifies that "the divine name in Arabic, *Allah*, may obscure the fact that this is in truth the same universal God who spoke to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus"[4]. Gilbert Reid further informs:

"The God taught by Islam is not a tribal God, but the God of all worlds or all creations. He is more than the God of Abraham or Israel; He is the God of all men"[5].

The misconception can also be corrected by tracing the etymology of the word ‗Allah' in Hebrew and Aramaic[6], respectively the languages of Moses and Jesus. Aramaic,

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[1] In his book *Islam A Mosaic, not A Monolith*, Vartan Gregorian noted that "most Americans tend to think of Islam as exclusively a religion of Arabs". Gregorian corrects: "Muslims are as diverse as humanity itself, representing one in five people in the world", with Arabs representing "only 15 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims". (Gregorian, V. (2003) *Islam A Mosaic, not A Monolith,* Brooking Institution Press, Washington D.C, p. 2.).

[2] *Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus*, p. 30, Harper Collins,1999.

[3] *Thorndike Barnhart Dictionary*, Harper Collins.

[4] F. E. Peters (1994) *A Reader on Classical Islam*, Princeton University Press, p. 3.

[5] Reid, Gilbert (1916) Islam, an Appreciation. *The Biblical World,* Vol. 48, No.1, p. 9-10. It is worth mentioning that many verses in the Quran begin with the vocative phrase 'O people' or 'O mankind': "*O mankind! Worship your Lord, Who has created you and those before you*" (2:21).

[6] See: Le Blank (1999)*The Bible Led Me to Islam*, , Al-Attique Publishers Inc, Canada.

Hebrew, and Arabic are cognate languages belonging to the family of Semitic languages[1]. In fact, the three languages are strikingly similar and it would be more reasonable to conceive them as dialects of a single language. In Hebrew, 'Allah' is pronounced *Eloha*, in Aramaic *Alaha*, and in Arabic *Allah*[2]. Ignoring minor differences, all three have in common the one and same root.

Jerald F. Dirks, a former ordained minister in the United Methodist Church and a graduate of Harvard University School, concludes that 'Allah' is consistent, not only with the Quran but with genuine Biblical traditions[3]. Etymologically, Arabic and Aramaic are one and the same language. The very strong proximity between these two and Hebrew suggests that they were not separate languages but rather 'mutually intelligible' dialects[4]. In the field of linguistics, two dialects are said to be *mutually intelligible* if each of which can be understood by the speakers of the other[5]. Moreover, the *isogloss* dividing the three dialects of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic must have been considerably narrower. Linguists use the technical word 'isogloss' to refer to the geographical line demarcating two or more adjacent dialects in a given area[6]. Hundreds of vocabulary items and linguistic forms testify to the striking similarity of these three dialects. Even if we are to adopt the remote assumption that they were three different

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(1) Crystal, D. (1992) *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Penguin Books, p. 25; Matthews, P. H. (1997) *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*, Oxford University Press, p.336.

(2) Bowker, John (1997) *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford University Press, p. 48.

(3) Dirks, J. F. (2001) *The Cross & The Crescent*, amana publications, United States, p.177.

(4) See Shaheen (1993: p. 220-221) where he arrives at similar conclusions. (Shaheen, Abdulsaboor (1993) *Fe 'Ilm All-ughah Al 'amm* (On General Linguistics), Al-Risalah Publishers, Lebanon).

(5) Crystal, D. (1992) *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Penguin Books, p. 260.

(6) *Ibid*, p.197.

languages, we are equally forced to accept the fact that they were, at the very least, 'cognate' languages. Two or more languages are said to be 'cognate' if they "have developed from a common ancestor"[1]. Let us examine another example. In the Bible, Jesus articulated the word 'Rabbi' and forbade his people to call themselves *Rabbi* (Matthew: 23:8). In Hebrew, Rabbi means 'master'[2]. Its Arabic equivalent is pronounced 'Rabb', or 'Rabbi' when used in the possessive case i.e. 'my master or lord'. The word *Rabb* and its different derivations are numerously iterated throughout the Quran (Quran: 1:1, 2:5, 3: 8-9, 114: 1).

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[1] Matthews, P. H. (1997) *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*, Oxford University Press, p.58.
[2] Bowker, John (1997) *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford University Press, p. 788.

The Attributes and Two Major Errors

Organized diversity and complexity in the cosmos forcefully point to a Designer with Attributes; not a hollow and featureless designer but a Designer with Attributes. Therefore, belief in Allah's existence and belief in His Attributes are inextricably interdependent. As Mahmoud R. Murad explains:

"The essence of Allah is named with Names and qualified with qualifications (Attributes), because it is impossible for any essence to exist without attributes. That is why believing in]the totality of[Allah's Names and Attributes is believing in Allah Himself"[(1)].

Belief in Allah's Attributes is a fundamental article of Islamic faith. "Typically", says Chittick "Muslims have sought to understand God by meditating on the implications of God‘s names and attributes as expressed in the Quran and the Sunnah…every name throws a different light on what exactly God is, what exactly he is not, and how exactly people should understand him and relate to him"[(2)].

The pond of correct belief in the Attributes remained tranquil until one sect appeared two centuries after the Prophet's demise. This is the *Mu'tazilah* sect. This sect did not only disturb the tranquillity of belief, but also muddied the waters with their extreme reliance on reason. These rationalists, heavily influenced by Aristotelian philosophy[(3)], engaged in wholesale importation of hermeneutical and

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(1) Murad, Mahmoud R. (2001) *The Manual of Articles of Faith*, Saudi Arabia, p. 36. Words in square brackets are mine.

(2) Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 8.

(3) Western science has been influenced by Aristotle's works until the Galilean era, after which Aristotelian philosophy began to decline. (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn, p. 25, Oxford University Press, 1996)

exegetical tools which were alien to the spirit of the Quran and the (Arabic) language by which it was understood. As Chittick had recently diagnosed:

"Although a good deal of thinking goes on among contemporary Muslims, little of it has roots in the Islamic intellectual tradition. It frequently calls upon the Quran and the Hadith as witness, but it is based on habits of mind that were developed in the West during the modern period"[(1)] .

The Mu'tazilah adopted a rational philosophical interpretation of the Attributes and this automatically triggered a series of problems. They believed that Allah did not have to be defined in terms of the Attributes articulated in the Quran and Sunnah. At times they would use diplomacy to propagate their view and camouflage their arguments with those of their Sunnite adversaries. But this proved useless as they went on to declare more extreme views. Some of them had already maintained the palpable absurdity that Allah neither existed within the physical world nor beyond it. In effect, He existed nowhere except in the mind of a philosopher. Another rationalist party believed in Allah's transcendence but reinterpreted His Attributes in such a way that they became unintelligible and impossible to relate to. All in all, their God was hardly any different from Aristotle's lifeless Prime Mover.

Sunni scholars immediately discerned the danger of defining Allah in such terms. They knew that "to push God into intellectual isolation in a holy ghetto of his own is unhealthy and unnatural"[(2)] because it encouraged the people to think that it was unnecessary to apply standards of decency and rationality inspired by God to human behavior[(3)]. In short, this view caused the people to become completely alienated

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(1) Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 47.
(2) Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 463.
(3) *Ibid*.

from their Creator. Sunni scholars confronted such ultra-mystical views which, due to their extreme emphasis on divine ineffability, were on the verge of developing the most shadowy understanding of Allah's Attributes. Unlike their adversaries, Sunni scholars based their arguments on a coherent body of evidence from the Quran, Sunnah, and linguistic expertise. Many of their opponents were considerably deficient in linguistic knowledge and this, in addition to blind deference to Greek philosophers, bore heavily on their interpretation of the religious texts[1]. Moreover, most, if not all, of their core arguments were special pleadings where certain premises were introduced or excluded either on spurious grounds or no grounds at all[2].

Muslims believe that by correctly understanding the revealed Names and Attributes one can gain a deeper appreciation of Allah's uniqueness. In addition to being One, Allah is All-Wise, All-Powerful, and All-Merciful. He is The Living, The Most Compassionate, The Designer, and the Creator. He is The Inward, The Outward, The Invigilator, and The Most High. Prophet Mohammad told his companions that from among Allah's infinite Names only ninety nine have been revealed[3], signifying that the God they worship cannot be contained by finite categories and definitions[4]. According to the Quran, if all the trees on earth were made into pens and all the seas were transformed into ink, still that would not be enough to write down Allah's knowledge even if the seas of ink were multiplied in quantities[5].

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[1] Mahmoud Azzamakhshari (circa 1075 –1144), well-versed in Arabic grammar and morphology, sometimes engaged in far-fetched parsing to support his rationalistic views on divine Attributes.

[2] Ibn-Taimiyyah has masterly treated this subject in his polymathic compendium *Al-Fataawaa* (2002), published by Darrul-qassim, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

[3] *Fathil-Baari* (No. 5031); *Assilsilah Assahihah* (No.199).

[4] Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 180.

[5] Quran: 31:27 & 18:109.

The Quran strongly disapproves of those who dispute *"about Allah, without knowledge, guidance, or an enlightening Book"*[1]. Concerning the Attributes, the reader is advised to heed two important considerations. First, the multitude of Allah's Names in no way contradicts His absolute Oneness. Second, Allah's Names, which are utterly noble and perfect, belong to Him in the manner that suits His infinite grandeur and majesty. *"The All-knowing"*[2], for example, is one Name mentioned in the Quran. It connotes a perfect and all-encompassing knowledge which is neither preceded by ignorance nor accompanied by oblivion or interrupted by slumber. *"The Powerful"* [3] and *"The Wise"*[4], are two Names which Allah combines in the Quran, both connoting perfect power and wisdom. Combining these two Names (The Powerful & The Wise) bears vital significance. It signifies that Allah's infinite power is not arbitrary or spontaneous but disposed by His infinite wisdom[5].

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[1] Quran: 22: 8.
[2] Quran: 51:30.
[3] Quran: 42:19.
[4] Quran: 12:83.
[5] Murad, Mahmoud R. (2001) *The Meaning and the Conditions of the Two Testimonies Of Islam*, Almurad's Islamic Manuals, p. 37-38.

The wonders of creation tell us something about Allah's unique Attributes

The Sunni understanding of the Attributes falls between two deviant extremes. The first tends to liken the Creator to the created, whether by drawing direct analogies, objectifying the Attributes, or any other means. The other tends to blur and mystify our understanding of the Attributes by misinterpreting their meanings or negating them altogether.

Tapping into their vast knowledge of the Quran, Sunnah, and the Arabic language, Sunni scholars formulated a descriptive paradigm which aimed at:

- Safeguarding the Names and Attributes against possible misinterpretation.

- Proving the speciousness of their opponents' arguments.

The paradigm was exceptionally effective, clear, and easy to understand. It carefully drew the line between the Creator and the created and reflected a deep religious insight. This may have captured Arnold Toynbee's attention who admired Islam for the "severity of its monotheism" and "the clearness of its apprehension of the transcendent aspect of God"[1]. The paradigm in question warned against two major errors. They are as follows:

First is the Error of *Tashbeeh*; that is likening Allah to His creation or, more generally, effecting resemblance between the Creator and the created. This includes *literal* (*unrestricted*) *anthropomorphization*[2] of the Attributes, objectifying their meanings[3], or drawing reckless analogies between Allah and His creations[4]. In the Quran we read:

> "Nothing whatsoever resembles Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer"[5].

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[1] Toynbee, Arnold (1956) *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 22.

[2] As opposed to **apparent anthropomorphization** which means that Allah and humans ONLY NOMINALLY have in common attributes such as love, mercy, knowledge. By 'nominally' I mean such attributes are shared in name only and the realities they stand for differ with respect to the referent they qualify. Hence, the Attributes referring to the Creator infinitely exceed ours in grandeur and differ from them in nature (we would not say, for example, that God's knowledge requires brain cells and neural circuits). **Literal anthropomorphization**, on the other hand, disregards the abovementioned conditions in which case the Creator appears barely distinguishable from humans or any of His creatures. Instances of unrestricted anthropomorphization abound in the Old Testament.

[3] To objectify a meaning or concept is to turn it into a concrete image. Figurative speech and personification are two common forms of objectification.

[4] Michelangelo's painting of God floating in space with a beard, accompanied by angles, and touching Adam's finger is a blatant example of *Tashbeeh*. Another example of fondness with anthropomorphic iconography can be found in Bronowski (1973) *The Ascent of Man*, where William Blake draws God shaping the earth using a compass.

[5] Quran: 42: 11.

"And there is nothing like Him"[1].

However, one critical issue deserves attention here. It has to do with the need to differentiate between the **meaning** of an Attribute and the **reality/nature** of that particular Attribute. In linguistics i.e. the study of language, scholars discuss the notion of **reference**. Reference is "the relationship between a linguistic expression and the entity in the external world to which it refers"[2].

The entities we refer to in the external world are called 'referents'. Psychologically, the linguistic expressions we use only help us form a mental representation of a given referent. Because our mental representation is, in effect, only a representation, it will inevitably fall short of encompassing the real and fully elaborate nature of the referent.

So when referring to a set of entities, we're not talking about their nature as they exactly exist in the real world[3]; rather we're only referring to our mental representation of them, which is by nature restricted and imperfect. To put it simply, let us remember that a copy of a paper is not the paper itself or, as Alfred Korzybski famously remarked, "the map is not the territory"[4]. Korzybski argued that because "we don't deal with reality directly but only indirectly via our nervous system and sense receptors"[5], there will always exist a fundamental difference between our understanding (map) and

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[1] Quran: 112: 4.

[2] Crystal, D. (1992) *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Penguin Books, p. 329. For example, the referent of the word 'pencil' is the object 'pencil'.

[3] Actually no one can do that, not even the collective intelligence of mankind.

[4] Korzybski, Alfred (2000) *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, Brooklyn, New York, p. 58.

[5] Bodenhamer, Bob G. & Hall, L. Michael (1999) *The User's Manual For The Brain*, Crown House Publishing Limited, p.63.

reality (territory). In other words, "we can never say everything about anything"[1] as reality defies flawless simplification. This is one reason why we use linguistic economy in our communication. We tend to eliminate certain information in order to save time and effort. So, if we can only deal *indirectly* with real-time reality, then what would be the case given the vast gulfs that separate human reason from the nature of the Creator? If we are unable to fathom the magnitude of the observable, let alone the unobservable, universe or the critical conditions surrounding life's origin, are we then in a position to pass judgements about Allah's Self and Attributes?

> "Be He Glorified and Exalted above all what they attribute to Him" (Quran: 6:100).

No doubt when it comes to such territories, the accuracy of our maps is far more at stake. When the Quran speaks of a Creator who is 'All-Seer' and 'All-Hearer' of everything, we immediately capture an irreducible meaning, the kernel of connotation if you wish, yet we just happen to be incapable of fathoming the nature of the Attributes being referred to. It is something like an illiterate in the sciences saying, "I know what light means but I don't know what light is"[2].

What has been discussed so far is faintly related to the controversial issue of metaphorical versus literal interpretation of the Attributes. Prominent Sunnite scholars such as Ibn-Taimiyyah and Ibnul-Qayim Al-Jowziyah, well versed in both Islamic theology and the Arabic language, have demonstrated that 'metaphor' is a misleading phraseology which deviant

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(1) *Ibid*.

(2) Even if one was to define light as packs of quanta or electromagnetic waves another would want to know what quanta and electromagnetic waves are and so on. The bottom line is that there is a discernable difference between the essence of a meaning and the reality which that meaning happens to denote.

sects have capitalized on to negate or distort the meanings of the Attributes[1]. The problem with metaphor, when speaking of God's Attributes, is that it "is a topic of unlimited subtlety and complexity"[2], remarks William P. Alston. Another problem is that metaphors are subjective literary tools we use to embellish or emblemize personal experience. Furthermore, metaphor is a slippery term because it barely lends itself to definability. In their article *Metaphor in Literature*, Elena Semino and Gerard Steen point out that different approaches to metaphor "disagree, sometimes quite dramatically, on *how* metaphor in literature differs from metaphor outside literature, or, in other words, on what the relationship is between metaphor in literature and metaphor elsewhere"[3].

In summary, one should bear in mind two vital considerations:

First: there is a decisive difference between the meaning of an Attribute and the reality or nature of that particular Attribute.

Second: the meanings of the Attributes can be comprehended without having to conceptualize their mind-bending reality. The language philosopher William P. Alston investigated whether humans can speak literally of God yet without compromising His uniqueness. He employed linguistic logic, semantics (the study of meaning), and syntax (the study of structure and grammar) and concluded that there is nothing illogical or inappropriate about speaking literally of God as long as the Attributes infinitely exceed ours in perfection[4]. Aliston's stance exactly coincides with that of the

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[1] Ibnul-Qayim (1998) *Assawa'iqul-Mursalah*, Saudi Arabia.

[2] Alston, William P. (2001) Speaking Literally of God. In Peterson, M. Et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 409.

[3] Semino, E. & Steen, G. (2008) Metaphor in Literature. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Edited by Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. Cambridge University Press, p. 233.

[4] Alston, William P. (2001) Speaking Literally of God. In Peterson, M. Et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 390.

knowledgeable *Sahabah* (the learned companions of Prophet Mohammad) and reaffirms the correctness of the methodology of Sunni scholars in their understanding of the Attributes.

Second is the Error of *Ta'teel*; that is negating the Attributes or nullifying their meanings[1]. The error of *Ta'teel* resulted from overreacting to the error of *Tashbeeh* (defined earlier). In fact, both extremes (*Tashbeeh* and *Ta'teel*) reinforced each other through continuous overreaction. As mentioned earlier, some sects used the trick of metaphor to nullify the true meanings of the Attributes and this was done under the pretext of defending divine ineffability. But this is an untenable rationalization given the fact that a distinction can be made between the *meaning* of an Attribute and the *reality* it is supposed to stand for. Sunni scholars reiterate a useful ruling in this regard which is, "Talking about the Attributes is tantamount to talking about the Self".

To nullify the meanings of the Attributes is to speak of a God who is in effect not only unknowable but also lacking in real existence for nothing may exist without attributes peculiar to its own nature. The latter is an essential theological maxim suggested and reiterated by the Islamic scholar Ibn-Taimiyyah who also rightly maintained that "he who commits *Tashbeeh* worships a statue while that who negates (commits *Ta'teel*) worships nothing"[2]. "Regarding the Attributes", says scholar Mohammad Khaleel Harras "the followers of Sunnah (i.e. the way of the Prophet) maintain the middle path between those who negate the Creator's Attributes and those who liken Him to what He has created"[3].

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[1] Nullification may come in different forms, but primarily through distortion (*Tahreef*) or modifying (*Takyeef*) the meanings of the Attributes.

[2] Ibn-Taimiyyah, A. (2005) *Naqthu Assasuttaqdees*, Saudi Arabia, p. 6.

[3] Harras, Mohammad K. (1995) *Sharhul-Aqeedatil Wasitiyyah*, Saudi Arabia, p. 185.

It is worth noting that disagreement over the Attributes only intensified several decades after the demise of the companions (followers of the Prophet). Deviating sects such as Mu'tazilah, Jahmiyah, Mujassimah, and Ash'arees to name but a few ran into different degrees of *Tashbeeh* and *Ta'teel* and sowed dissension within the Muslim community. Prominent Sunni scholars at the time[1] strove to refute their arguments and denounced such sects as *Mubtadi'ah* (people who introduced things not approved by the religion).

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[1] Like Ahmad Bin Hanbal, Ibn-Khuzaimah, Al-Marwazi, Ibn-Mandah, Ibn-Battah, Ibn-Taimiyyah, and many others.

ISLAM, SCIENCE, CREATION, AND THE HUMAN ORIGIN

On Science, Evolution, and Atheism

"There are so many flaws in Darwinism that one can wonder why it swept so completely through the scientific world, and why it is still endemic today".

(Fred Hoyle) [1]

"The atheist - I mean the genuine, absolute atheist, with all his sincerity and devotion - is but an abortive saint and, at the same time, a mistaken revolutionist".

(Jacques Maritain) [2]

Mania for science and the scientific is no less threatening than religious extremism. The mania has sometimes developed into the habit of distorting reality only to meet caprice (*hawa*)[3]. Ironically, in doing so, many profess allegiance to objectivity and classify themselves among the impartial elite which, at the end of the day, doesn't seem to be the case. William C. Chittick explains:

"People believe that science alone is qualified to uncover the secrets of the universe, and not only that, they accept the discoveries as reliable truth, not realizing that they are asserting their belief in the authoritative knowledge of the priesthood of science"[4].

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[1] Hoyle, Fred & Wickramasinehe N.C. (1981) *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism*; Touchstone Book. Simon & Schuster, Inc. New York. 133.

[2] Maritain, Jacques (1949) On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul.), p. 267.

[3] Quran 4:135.

[4] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 68.

From the realm of mathematics and computer science, Rudy Rucker relates a pathetic human scene:

"Endlessly, we hurry up and down corridors, meeting people, knocking on doors, conducting our investigations. But the ultimate success will never be ours. Nowhere in the castle of science is there a final exit to the absolute truth"[(1)].

Moreover, an undeniable fact about all scientific practices is that they are, more often than not, emotionally loaded, personally and sometimes spiritually driven behaviours. In this sense, the scientific psyche becomes hardly any different from the farmer's motivation to plough land or the child's desire to experience adventure at the funfair. As the German sociologist Norbert Elias has rightly observed:

"Like other people, scientists engaged in the study of nature are, to some extent, prompted in the pursuit of their task by personal wishes and wants; they are often enough influenced by specific needs of the community to which they belong. They may wish to foster their own career. They may hope that the results of their inquiries will be in line with theories they have enunciated before or with the requirements and ideals of the groups with which they identify themselves"[(2)].

And Mary Midgley whose diagnosis is closely pertinent:

"Many, like Darwin and the great geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, have held that an attitude of awe and veneration for the wonders of the physical world is an essential condition for studying them properly. Others have talked in a more predatory way about the joys of the chase and the triumph of catching facts. Both motives, and many others, are evidently

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(1) Barrow, John D. (1998) *Impossibility: the Limits of Science and the Science of Limits,* Oxford University Press, p. 218.

(2) Elias, N. (1956) Problems of Involvement and Detachment, *British Journal of Sociology*, 7:3, p. 228.

so habitual in science that they are only not mentioned because they are taken for granted"[1].

From another perspective, the debate over what constitutes science is far from settled. In his provocative essay *The Demise of the Demarcation Problem*, philosopher Larry Laudan has persuasively shown that there is no reliable way by which we can *precisely* demarcate the scientific from what is pejoratively termed as 'the pseudoscientific'. The classical convention that science - at least in its positivistic guise - is in possession of a definite territory of its own is now shattered. Laudan thus advises that "if we would stand up and be counted on the side of reason, we ought to drop terms like 'pseudo-science' and 'unscientific' from our vocabulary; they are just hollow phrases which do only emotive work for us"[2].

Getting Lost in the Details

Some scientists and philosophers have become so entangled in the countless particulars of reality that they have missed a level of meaning only accessible through observing the big picture. To further clarify this point, I would like to borrow a concept frequently used in Learning Theory[3]. It has to do with two modes of perception individuals use when they set out in acquisition of knowledge. When we learn, we can, either, start from the details (bottom), collate particular pieces of information, and synthesize them as we ascend towards a more comprehensive and integrative body of knowledge (up). This is called the *bottom-up* mode of perception because we

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[1] Midgley, M. (2002) *Evolution as Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears*, Routledge, p.2.
[2] Laudan, L. (1983) The Demise of the Demarcation Problem. In *Physics, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis;* edited by R. S. Cohen & L. Laudan. p. 125.
[3] Jordan, Anne et al. (2008) *Approaches to Learning*, Open University Press, p. 38-39.

start from the details and end up with the governing generality or the bird's-eye view. Or, we could opt for the *top-down* mode of perception. Here, we start from the big picture, from the bird's-eye view, and descend in search of more detail until we reach a level of intense variety just as if some gigantic intelligent being had magnified planet earth from outer space only to see the extreme diversity of life on the ground.

Some scientists and philosophers never appear to rise above the bottom level. They are completely embroiled in the details of a given phenomena. They never seem to proceed away from the molecular, genetic, subgenetic, atomic, and subatomic level and ascend towards a coherent image of the whole, the final outcome observable to the naked human eye. When we reach this level (the big picture that is), we inescapably mount a cognitive platform that allows us to appreciate the meaning of existence as a unity and thus arrive at a genuine appreciation of ourselves in the larger scheme of reality[(1)]. Realizing this fact may partially explain why many scientists, in the last five decades or so, have become increasingly curious about the *Fitness of the Cosmos for Life*[(2)].

Only recently in human history has the universe been explored at smaller scales undreamed of (atomic, subatomic (quantum); genetic, subgenetic). Past generations, lacking in advanced technology and curious to know there position in the vast venue of existence, had nothing before their eyes but the big picture (top-down). The world to them was more meaningful than it is for contemporary generations. They observed a uniform reality, a coherent kaleidoscope of

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(1) This may explain why "physicists, who always seem to be on the verge of a multidimensional general theory of everything, are the more likely to retain some belief in a supernatural power" (Sharp, David (2002) Science, Faith, and Gods; *The Lancet* ; Vol. 359; March 2; p. 807).

(2) *The Fitness of the Cosmos for Life* (2008), edited by John D. Barrow et al. Cambridge University Press.

phenomena before their eyes. Deluged by such awe-inspiring *Ayat* (signs), very few, if any, were those who were ready to exclude the involvement of an omnificent Creator.

Human beings are part of a huge and complicated ecological system which, directly or indirectly, affects their choices and actions. Yet, all thanks to Allah we are intrinsically self-conscious beings, endowed with the sophisticated ability to detect subconscious agencies and align them with our conscious goals[(1)]. Not only that, but we also enjoy multilevel reflexive thinking, a capacity that can never be simulated artificially[(2)]. As Daniel Dennett wrote, reflexive thinking is most evident in our use of *meta-language*, the ability to "represent one's representations, reflect on one's reflections, and react to one's reactions"[(3)].

As far as ecological systems are concerned, the 'butterfly effect' may provide a good clue as to what it is like to live in a complicatedly interrelated system. The butterfly effect, a phrase coined by scientists, is equivalent to the more technical notion of *sensitive dependence on initial conditions* in the chaos theory. This notion states that small variations at the initial condition of a dynamical system may produce large variations in the long term behaviour of that system. For instance, the butterfly's flapping of its wings might create tiny changes in the atmosphere that may ultimately alter the path of a tornado, delay it, accelerate it, or even prevent the occurrence of a tornado in a certain location[(4)]. Interestingly, behavioural psychologists say that a similar principle underlies the process by which human beings develop certain habits

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(1) Jopling, David A. (2002) *Self-Knowledge and the Self*, Routledge, New York, p. 2.

(2) Gödel's theorem, although slightly irrelevant here, reveals both the magnificence and limitation of the human mind.

(3) Dennett, Daniel C. (1984) *Elbow Room: the Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*, Clarendon Press, (edit.), p. 29.

(4) Butterfly Effect < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly_effect>, accessed: 20-3-2009.

over prolonged periods of time. The germ of an idea is entertained in the subconscious; it becomes bigger and more vivid, develops into will, transforms into action, and with repetition becomes an established habit. In cosmology, many scientists believe that the critical properties of the initial state of the universe (i.e. big bang) are directly responsible for the kind of universe we see today. Evolutionists too hypothesize the arguable notion of *primordial soup,* the initial matter out of which all living organisms have evolved. No matter what the initial states of life may have been, they should not entirely defy the grasp of human understanding; otherwise the Quran's injunction would be pointless:

> "Tell them (O Mohammad): Journey across the land and see how He (Allah) has begun the creation"[(1)].

Learned Muslims see no reason at all why authentic science should supplant correct belief in the Creator. Whether the laws of the cosmos are demonstrably complicated, detailed, and deterministic, or (seemingly) chaotic[(2)], random, and indeterministic, all is the work of Allah; all changes therein flow from His eternal creative activity:

> "To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in

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[(1)] Quran: 29:19.

[(2)] It should be noted that 'chaos' is only the superficial *status quo* apparent to the human observer, who is by nature limited and finite in time, space, instrumentation, and sophistication. As mathematician Roger Penrose and others have shown, chaos has no intrinsic reality, lest it would be utterly inconceivable that chaotic conditions should breed continuous uniformity at a macrocosmic scale. This view, adopted by physicists like John Wheeler, "has stressed", relates cosmologist Paul Davies "how lawlike behaviour can emerge from the apparent lawlessness of random fluctuations, because even chaos can possess statistical regularities" (Davies, Paul (1992) *The Mind of God: Science & the Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Penguin, p. 193).

His dominion: it is He Who created all things and measured their creation in due proportions"[1].

Belief in the unity of creation[2] and unity of knowledge - hence Edward O. Wilson's *Consilience*[3] - naturally emanates from *Tawheed*: firm belief in the absolute Oneness of the Creator and acting according to this belief. As William Chittick had observed, "Islamic thought was characterized by a tendency toward unity, harmony, integration, and synthesis. The great Muslim thinkers were masters of many disciplines, but they looked upon them as branches of the single tree of *tawheed*. There was never any contradiction between astronomy and zoology, or physics and ethics, or mathematics and law, or mysticism and logic. Everything was governed by the same principles, because everything fell under God's all-encompassing reality"[4]. "The history of European thought", Chittick adds "is characterized by the opposite trend"[5].

A perennial philosophical question for which the Quran provides a relieving answer is: How can we explain a universe that *seems* to function autonomously and, at the same time, acknowledge the continuous involvement of divine action?

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[1] Quran: 25:2.

[2] Henderson thus wrote, "We appear to be led to the assumption that the genetic or evolutionary processes, both cosmic and biological, when considered in certain aspects, **constitute a single** orderly development that yields results not merely contingent, but resembling those which in human action we recognize as purposeful. For undeniably, two things which are related together in a complex manner by reciprocal fitness **make up in a very real sense a unit**, - something quite different from the two alone, or the sum of the two, or the relationship between the two. **In human affairs such a unit arises only from the effective operation of purpose**" (Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p.279).

[3] Wilson, Edward O. (1999) *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, Vintage Books, New York.

[4] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 13.

[5] *Ibid*.

According to the Quran, it is Allah who "*gave everything its creation (i.e. form and nature), and further gave (it) guidance*"[1]. But where does the interface between divine creativity and guided evolution exactly lie? At present, we have no definite answer. But, as Charles Townes, Nobel-winning physicist and co inventor of the laser, pointed out, it shouldn't trouble us because we know that there are a lot of things we just don‘t understand yet[2].

"Allah knows and you know not"[3].

Some evolutionists, pushing the *survival-of-the-fittest*[4] motto beyond limits and obsessed with the evolutionary tenet of *progress towards perfection*, conceitedly maintain that our ancestors were barely humanoid creatures, with underdeveloped thinking capacities who, across the ages, evolved into the highly sophisticated and cognitively unsurpassed beings (*Homo sapiens*) of today. This is their time-honoured discovery! To begin with, the very idea of *progress towards perfection*, upon which rests a whole body of literature in Darwinian evolution, is no longer held as a valid thesis. John Stewart confirms:

"Evolutionists do not currently agree on whether evolution is progressive. Most believe it is not. The view that evolution is progressive and that humans are now at the leading edge of

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[1] Quran: 20:49.
[2] Richardson W. Mark & Slack, Gordy (eds.) (2001) *Faith in Science: Scientists Search for Truth*. Routledge, p. 178.
[3] Quran: 2: 232.
[4] Ever since Herbert Spencer first coined it, "the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’ has been used to describe an individualistic law showing such things as co-operation, love and altruism to be unreal, a law which (somewhat mysteriously) both demands and predicts that they should always give way to self-interest" (Midgley, M. (2002) *Evolution as Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears*, Routledge, p. 7).

evolution on this planet is not supported by most evolutionary thinkers"[1].

Mary Midgley also includes as one of the long-held fallacies "the idea that evolution is a steady, linear upward movement, a single inexorable process of improvement, leading (as a disciple of Herbert Spencer's put it) from gas to genius"[2].

Stephen Jay Gould, the renowned American evolutionist, opines that the 'progress' fallacy sprang from "**following a deep bias** that equates large and progressive with ordered and regular, while associating tiny and primitive with amorphous and disorganized"[3].

When Charles Darwin wrote *The Descent of Man*, he dedicated an entire chapter "to show", says Darwin "that there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties"[4]. I do not know from where to start to demonstrate the palpable absurdity of such a proposition. I do not know whether it deserves the slightest effort to refute it. Reality belies it immediately. Where on earth or in the entire history has there been a higher mammal capable of understanding, let alone producing, the genius in Newton's calculus, Al-Khwarizmi's algorithm, Gödel's Theorem, Einstein's relativity, Prigogine's evolving complexity, Schrödinger's cat, the imagination of Picasso, the brilliance of Ibn-Khaldun, and Heisenberg's uncertainty

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[1] Stewart, John (2000) *Evolution's Arrow: The Direction of Evolution and the Future of Humanity*. The Chapman Press, p. 6. Stephen Jay Gould affirms the same. See: Gould, S. J. (1996) *Full House: the Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*. New York: Harmony Books; and Maynard Smith, J. p.13.

[2] Midgley, Mary (2002) *Evolution as Religion: Strange Hopes and Stranger Fears*, Routledge, p.2.

[3] Gould, Stephen J. (1996) The Shape of Life. *Art Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Contemporary Art and the Genetic Code, (Spring), p. 44, Published by: College Art Association (emphasis mine).

[4] Darwin, Charles (1874) *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, New York, Vol. 1, p. 95.

principle? Where is that higher mammal that is mentally capable of generating the infinite creative output of human language? Where is that mammal that is capable of crafting a nuclear accelerator, a space shuttle, a computer, or even a simple calculator? How are we to speak of the intriguing realm of human consciousness, the surreal world of dreams, and the ingenuity of human experience indisputably unexcelled, even unparalleled, by any living creature if we are to accept the claim that we are barely any different from chimpanzees and gibbons?

"While men function partly as other animals do[1], as a whole they function and behave in a way no other animal does", says Elias[2].

In fact, Darwin flagrantly contradicts himself in a lengthy confession which is worth quoting. He wrote:

"It may be urged that, as man differs so greatly in his mental power from all other animals, there must be some error in this conclusion. No doubt the difference in this respect is enormous, *even if we compare the mind of one of the lowest savages, who has no words to express any number higher than four, and who uses hardly any abstract terms for common objects or for the affections, with that of the most highly organized ape*"[3].

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[1] A fact clearly acknowledged by the Quran. According to the Quran (6:38), humans resemble the animal kingdom in many aspects, an observation that prompted Darwinists to view humans as sharing with animals (i.e. apes) a common ancestral node in the network of evolution. Strangely, the fact that humans, on the other hand, are profoundly different from animals (e.g. moral conscience, religious experience, highly abstract cognitive functions) is either traded down in favor of *superficial* similarities (with animals) or explained away at any cost.

[2] Elias, N. (1956) Problems of Involvement and Detachment, *British Journal of Sociology*, 7:3, p. 248.

[3] Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 85 (emphasis mine). **Elsewhere** in his *Descent of Man*, Darwin also admits that "these several inventions, by which man in the rudest state has become so preeminent, are the direct results of the development of his

Two works from Surrealist art reflecting the richness of human experience. Surrealistic imagery characterizes the world of dreams and can be reproduced through deliberate creativity. An essential element of surrealist art is that of *creative manipulation*, where the conscious and subconscious powers are at work.

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powers of observation, memory, curiosity, imagination, and reason. I cannot, therefore, understand how it is that Mr. Wallace maintains, that "natural selection could only have endowed the savage with a brain a little superior to that of an ape" (Darwin, C. (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, P. 68).

Paleontologically, there is no reliable evidence that the first human beings to appear on this planet were mentally or physically less privileged than their descendents in the 21st century in any significant manner. As the twentieth century zoologist, Austin H. Clark had noted:

"So far as we are able to judge from the actual evidence, the use of fire and the use of tools were human attributes from the very first appearance of mankind. It may with reasonable assurance be assumed that the same is true of speech and the use of clothing and of ornaments. There is not the slightest evidence that these human attributes were acquired one by one as man departed more and more widely from an apelike ancestor"[(1)].

The Swedish evolutionist Bo Gräslund also observed that:

"There is nothing to suggest that the people of late prehistory were in any way intellectually or neurologically different from you or me. In other words, the modern human is not modern at all"[(2)].

All humans, at all times, consult the same necessary timeless premises; they effectively collate relevant data, arriving at similar conclusions and almost identical generalities. There is no indubitable evidence indicating that the underlying pattern (or mental algorithm) of human intelligence has ever radically changed at some historical turning point. The only things that have changed considerably - due to dynamic cultural factors and evolving scientific paradigms[(3)] - are the scope and variety of phenomena investigated, the sophistication of tools and instruments, and

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(1) Clark, Austin H. (1930) *The New Evolution: Zoogensis*, The Williams & Welkins Company, p. 6.

(2) Gräslund, Bo (2005) *Early Humans and their World*, Routledge, p. 3.

(3) For a comprehensive discussion see Khun's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

the baggage of nomenclature, taxonomies, and typologies coined accordingly. William James thus notes:

"All our thinking today has evolved gradually out of primitive thought, and *the only really* important changes that have come over its manner (as distinguished from the matters to which it believes) are a greater hesitancy in asserting its convictions, and the habit of seeking verification for them whenever it can"[(1)].

Historians Will and Ariel Durant drive the point home:

"If progress is real despite our whining, it is not because we are born any healthier, better, or wiser than infants were in the past, but because we are born to a richer heritage, born on a higher level of that pedestal which the accumulation of knowledge and art raises as the ground and support of our being. The heritage rises, and man rises in proportion as he receives it"[(2)].

This latter fact patently undermines the concept of 'gradual progress' underpinning evolutionary theory. The late Stephen Jay Gould, known for advancing his revolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium, asserted that "the fossil record with its abrupt transitions offers no support for gradual change"[(3)]. Even Darwin, the first to sanction gradual evolution over aeons of time, admitted that - in certain respects - it was impossible to infer any evidence for gradation[(4)].

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(1) James, W. (1911) *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p. 15 (emphasis mine).

(2) Durant, Will and Ariel (1968) *The Lessons of History*, Simon & Schuster, New York, p. 101-102.

(3) This View of Life: *Natural History*, (86) 6: 22-25. Before Gould, Austin H. Clark wrote:

"Since we have not the slightest evidence, either among the living or the fossil animals, of any intergrading types falling between the major groups it is a fair supposition that there never have been any such intergrading types" (Clark, Austin H. (1930) *The New Evolution: Zoogensis*, The Williams & Welkins Company, p. 196).

(4) Darwin, Charles (1998) *The Origin of the Species*, Wordsworth Edition, p. 144. The fact that paleontology has failed to provide uncontroversial evidence for gradual evolutionary change has also been

Evolutionary Creation or Creative Evolution?

Suppose we accept everything about evolution, lock, stock, and barrel. We would naturally posit that humans are only an epiphenomenon of random physicochemical activity at the dawn of time, devoid of spiritual propensities and entirely lacking in religious tendencies. If such was the case, we are compelled to ask: why should evolution produce beings with firm numinous convictions?

If evolution in the atheistic sense is real and, as a result, necessitates a preclusion of God's existence, then it (evolution) should concomitantly engender a psychological condition which is completely unreceptive to theism, design, and creation. If we are the sole product of evolution, if we are the legitimate progeny of nature, atheism would have been every person's inalienable birthright. It would have been the persistent norm and 'theism' would have been the exception, the anomaly. The sweeping majority of humanity would have been non-believers and only a tiny minority, like a drop in the ocean, would have been the outlaws which atheists call 'believers'! Our genes would have been saturated with 'atheistic' chemicals, our minds would have been inherently impervious to the idea of God or any religious experience, and our religious lexis would have been squeezed out for good[(1)]. That's the natural conclusion. But if we run a quick reality check, none of this has *ever* been nor will ever be the case.

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expressed by Jeffrey H. Schwartz (1999), Professor of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh. The title of his book i.e. *Sudden Origins* is indicative of his views on the origin of species. See: *Sudden Origins: Fossils, Genes, and the Emergence of Species*, John Wiley & Sons: New York, p. 89).

(1) Interestingly, Michael R. Trimble, Emeritus Professor of Behavioural Neurology, relates the story of one of his patients who "woke to find himself in heaven - a considerable surprise to him, as he was an atheist". (Trimble, Michael R. (2007) *The Soul in the Brain: The Cerebral Basis of Language, Art, and Belief*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 151).

Ray Billington observed that 'God' "seems to be as essential to the language as salt to the sea or oxygen to the air, with an overwhelming majority of the human race confessedly believing in God, we're looking at not only an enormous number but also a wide range of people: rich and poor, black and white, scholarly and illiterate, sophisticated and simple, cultured and superstitious"[(1)].

In the light of the abovementioned facts, we may come to understand the unenviable situation of disbelievers when they stand defenceless before Allah in the Afterlife. The believers, who were once the subject of mockery, will be among Allah's witnesses against the allies of disbelief:

> "And those who argue against Allah after He has been acknowledged (by believers), their argument is invalid in the sight of their Lord, and wrath is upon them and to them is allocated a terrible torment"[(2)].

Revisiting evolution! One may reasonably argue that various forms of highly organized biochemical complexity deal a deadly blow to both the notion of evolutionary gradualness and the organzing mechanism attributed to chance! Several scientists cite the 'amino acid' example to drive the point home. Amino acids are chemical compounds which perform important functions in our bodies. They break down and form protein molecules, they play a vital role in healing many diseases such as Alzheimer's, Cancer, Chronic fatigue, congestive heart failure, and their supplements can be used to treat epilepsy, herpes simplex, and HIV. Yet, evolutionists claim that since there is a possibility to replicate the conditions necessary for producing amino acids in the

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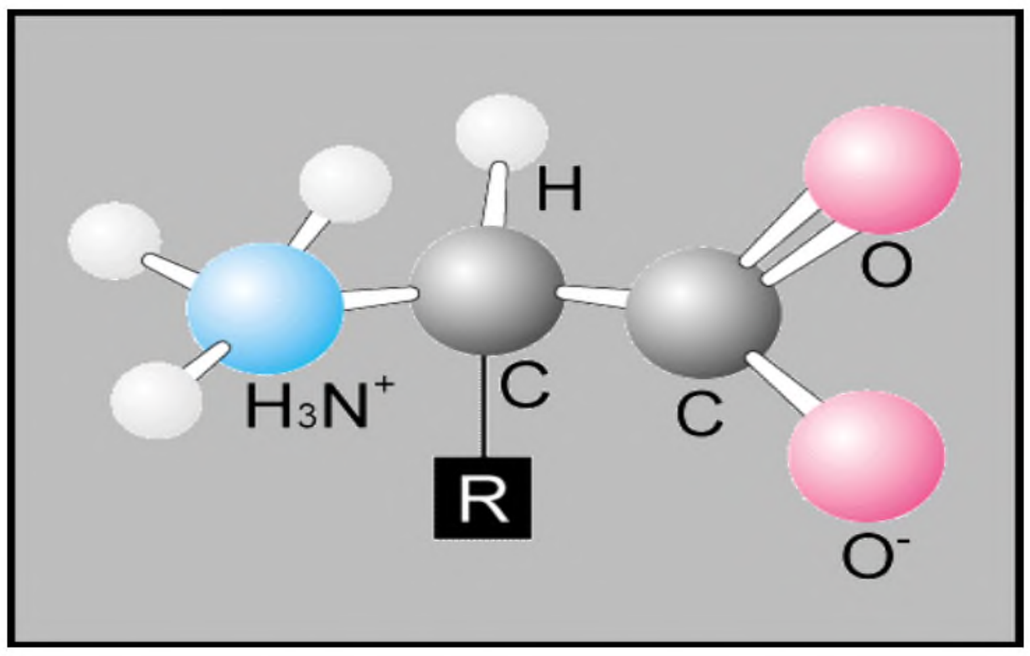
[(1)]Billington, R. (2002) *Religion without God*, Routledge, (edit.) p. 1, 4.
[(2)] Quran: 42:16. This is a cogent argument because if it was unnatural to believe in God, the natural pervasive alternative would have been atheism, which is not the case.

laboratory[1], then we may confidently say that life has evolved in a similar manner. Fred Hoyle, the English Astronomer and mathematician, calculated the odds in favor of this assumption and came to the conclusion that:

"No one has shown that the correct arrangements of amino acids, like the orderings in enzymes, can be produced by this method...Nevertheless, many scientists have made this leap-from the formation of individual amino acids to the random formation of whole chains of amino acids…I once unflatteringly described the thinking of these scientists as a junkyard mentality' "[2].



The structure of an amino acid

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[1] Hoyle, F. (1983) *The Intelligent Universe*, London, p. 18-19. **It should be noted** that Hoyle's views on the origin of life have been controversial and sometimes the subject of parody.
But Holye is not alone in rejecting chance. Scientists such as "Von Neumann…Wigner, Landsberg, and Morowitz", quotes Mayer, have mathematically shown that random fluctuations of molecules "would not produce the minimal complexity needed for even a primitive replication system" (Meyer, Stephen (2000) Evidence for Design in Physics and biology. In *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, Behe, Michael et al., Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute, Vol. 9, p. 80).

[2] *Ibid*. Hoyle likens such evolutionists to someone waiting for a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard to assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein (Hoyle, F. (1981) Hoyle on Evolution. *Nature*, Vol. 294, November, p. 12).

Hoyle's statistical findings vastly minimize the chances that primordial soup - if it ever existed - was something accidental, although he meant to refute primordial soup altogether. The primordial soup theory claims that life has evolved from a chaotic amalgam of primeval physico-chemical properties. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, professor of applied mathematics and astronomy, calculated the odds in favour of this assumption and they turned out to be very minuscule:

"The trouble is that there are about two thousand enzymes, and the chance of obtaining them all in a random trial is only one part in $(10^{20})^{2000} = 10^{40,000}$, **an outrageously small probability** that could not be faced **even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup**"[(1)].

The evolutionary principle of gradual progression towards perfection may further be weakened by the (arguable) notion of 'irreducible complexity'. According to it, irreducible complex structures are ones that could not have been produced by evolution because their simple structures happen to defy incremental emergence into being. Professor Michael Behe, the biologist who promoted the notion above, explains:

"It turns out that irreducible complexity systems are headaches for Darwinian theory, because they are resistant to being produced in the gradual, step-by-step manner that Darwin envisioned"[(2)].

However, several scientists, including prominent evolutionary theists such as Kenneth R. Miller and others, refuse to accept 'irreducible complexity' as a valid argument for creationism or design. Miller, for example, although a believer in God, argues that 'irreducible complexity' is only "a classic argument from the nineteenth century... rewrapped in

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(1) Hoyle, F. & Wickramasinghe, N.C. (1983) *Evolution from Space*, London, p.24.

(2) Behe, Michael J. (2000) Design at the Foundation of Life. In *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, Michael J. Behe, et al., Ignatius Press, San Francisco, p. 120.

the shiny packaging of biochemistry"[1], then he proceeds to explain how. But Miller and his proponents have obviously waged their arguments against Behe's own interpretation of irreducible complexity and I believe more can be gained from the notion in question if we can ignore Behe's version and apply the idea to a larger scheme of existence.

Many of the implications of irreducible complexity appear to overlap with those suggested by the Anthropic Teleological principle, which we will soon explain in more detail. This principle tells us, among other things, that we exist in a universe which contains extremely critical values – or constants according to physicist John Barrow[2] – that if they were any different human life would have been impossible. This can make a good example (or certainly another version) of irreducible complexity in the sense that such values, such as the value of intergalactic gravity and gravity on our planet, can never be reduced to less then what they are[3]. As Walter L. Bradley, Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas, explains:

"The origin of life seems to be the ultimate example of irreducible complexity. I believe that cosmology and the origin of life provide the most compelling examples of Intelligent Design in nature. I am compelled to agree with the eloquent affirmation of design by Harold Morowitz (1987): ⊣ find it hard not to see design in a universe that works so well. Each new scientific discovery seems to reinforce that vision of

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[1] Miller, K. R. (2007) *Finding Darwin's God*, Harper Perennial, p. 134-135. **However**, if irreducible complexity holds, then it should be noted that I'm using it to weaken the progression-to-perfection hypothesis. My intention was not to use it as an argument for God's existence or even design, for this can be cogently demonstrated in many other ways.

[2] Barrow, John D. (2003) *The Constants of Nature*, Vintage Books.

[3] Unless we are prepared to conceive a universe devoid of life as we now know it.

design. As I like to say to my friends, the universe works much better than we have any right to expect"[1].

Indeed, even if we adopt the extremely remote probability that life and the cosmos have originated from initial chance, we can neither empirically nor logically adopt the proposition that the subsequent order – or purposeful functioning in Henderson's terms[2] – maintained over millions of years has also been and still continues to be at the mercy of chance. It is very logical to propose that what has started by chance must also be punctuated by intervals of chance or at least flickers of occasional randomness, both at the macrocosmic and microcosmic scale. This follows from the fact that the odds for this latter proposition are a trillion times greater than the odds in favour of the former proposition (that life has emerged from utter chance)[3]. The accurate manner by which various forms of life continue to replicate their fundamental processes is an excellent example in this connection. Quoting Ilya Prigogine:

"From the first cellular division to the formation of the adult organism, through the differentiation to specialized cells and the tissue and organ formation, all of the events must occur at the right time and place; otherwise the result would be a completely chaotic behavior resulting in death"[4].

Unless we assume that any randomness is *really apparent* rather than *apparently real* and only exists for a purpose

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[1] Bradley, Walter L. (2006) Information, Entropy, and the Origin of Life. In *Debating Design From Darwin to DNA.* Edited by William A. Dembski & Michael Ruse. Cambridge University Press, p. 350.

[2] Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p.279.

[3] The calculations done by prominent figures such as Cairns-Smith, Ilya Prigogine, and others have shown that the probability of obtaining functionally sequenced biomacromolecules at random is, according to Prigogine, vanishingly small even on the scale of billions of years. (Meyer, Stephen (2000) Evidence for Design in Physics and Biology. In *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, Behe, Michael et al., Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute, Vol. 9, p. 73).

[4] Prigogine, I. & Nicolis, G. (1977) *Self-Organization in Nonequilibrium Systems*, p. 20.

unknown to us, we should be left with one conclusion: that chaos is another synonym for order. Consequently, we will have to overhaul our entire lexis and distrust our current inventory of scientific knowledge.

Design: Allah's Univocal Sign

> "And we have not created the heaven and earth and all that is between them without a purpose. That is the thought of those who disbelieve".
>
> (Quran: 38:27)

Instances of deliberation and marks of intelligible variety statistically correlate with our propensity to invoke design. Mathematician William A. Dembski developed the *complexity-specification* criterion which aims at establishing design as an unmistakable feature of countless instances in life and the cosmos. The idea of this principle is simple but very profound. It establishes the fact that complexity, contingency, and specification are inherent qualities in any design, as opposed to fabrication where design is apparent but not inherent or genuine[(1)]. A jar of ink that drops by accident on a large sheet of paper may leave a hexagonal-looking splash but that does not point to design. Design is the result of a purposeful activity as in the work of a skilful sculptor. We naturally associate design with noticeable patterning. This not only characterizes the labour in human artefacts but also forcefully emanates from any natural event of noticeable complexity and specification.

Atheism is neither reason-friendly nor consonant with the universal dictates of human experience (see 'Appendix Three' at the end of this book). Atheists themselves admit that believers' belief in the Creator grows from the widely, if not universally, common experience that designed entities imply a designer. But atheists quickly turn around and say that analogies from human experience are deceptive and unreliable

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(1) Dembski, William A. (2000) The Third Mode of Explanation: Detecting Evidence of Intelligent Design. In *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, Behe, Michael et al., Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute, Vol. 9, p. 17-39.

because the hypothesized Creator is completely unknown to us and to formulate analogical syllogisms from human life in order to prove something which is completely absent from us is, to say the least, a very feeble way of arguing for God's existence. But atheists here too fall into a whirlpool of contradictions for two reasons. **Firstly**, we can only pass judgments of any kind, ontological or epistemological, negative or positive, through the medium of human experience. Even atheists find it impossible to speak of God or anything else in isolation of the mediating effect of human experience. Arguments for God's existence, particularly the Anthropic Cosmological argument and those from design, are perfectly consonant with the maxims of human experience.

To further clarify, countless instances from human experience forcefully justify the plausibility of arguments from design **but we cannot find** a single instance *from human experience* that cogently shows how design or organized complexity can possibly exist without an intelligent designer/organizer. The next move for the atheist is to invoke evolution in order to demonstrate, as he would contend, how adaptation and natural selection prove the possibility of apparent design without an intelligent designer. But this is a very weak argument for the reason that adaptation and natural selection can easily be conceived as instantiations of exquisite design[(1)]. Evolutionary atheists, such Stephen J. Gould, Dawkins, and many others, have pronouncedly marvelled at the greatness, magnificence, "and elegance of biological

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[(1)] Design in this context is far more complex, dynamic, and diverse than the laws operating in Paley's stationary watch. Arguing from a relevant perspective, Neil Ormerod, Bernard Lonergan, and several philosophers further maintain that "statistical lawfulness does not eliminate the reality of design in the universe. Rather it specifies the mode of such design, a design encompassed in the notion of emergent probability." (Ormerod, Neil (2005) Chance and Necessity, Providence and God, *Irish Theological Quarterly*; 70; p. 273).

design"[1]. Needless to say, no rational person would marvel at an incomprehensible hodge-podge of loosely related events. This latter assertion also obtains its legitimacy from the truisms of human experience. **Secondly**, the phrase 'natural selection' is more of a contradiction in terms. Selection is the process of selecting. The adjective 'natural' only performs a cosmetic job and does not even extenuate the fallacious implications of the phrase in question. Natural selection is specious phraseology. It cannot explain the ultimate causes of its referent(s), it does not preclude the involvement of intelligent choice, and, more importantly, it cannot answer the question __Why is there something rather than nothing?‘‘[2]. As Martin Rees, from the field of astrophysics, has relevantly put it:

"Theorists may, some day, be able to write down fundamental equations governing physical reality. But physics can never explain what 'breathes fire' into the equations, and actualizes them in a real cosmos" [3].

Judging from human experience, the act of selecting, especially where sophisticated and highly complex acts of selection take effect, is a property one would naturally attribute to an intelligent selector. In fact, we human beings perform countless examples of natural selection. A very thirsty person would 'naturally select' a glass of water even if there were several other kinds of drinkable fluids available. But is it rational (or even natural!) to opine that the act of selecting that just happened was not the choice of an intelligent being? The honeycomb is a remarkable piece of 'intelligent' architecture and, for every cell, the bee (by instinct, behold!) *naturally selects* the right substance, shape, and dimensions. From the

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[1] Dawkins, R. (2006) *The Blind Watchmaker*, Penguin, p. 15.
[2] Flanagan, Owen (2007) *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World*, MIT Press, p. 190.
[3]Rees, M. (2000) *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*, Basic Books, P. 131.

moment they existed, bees do this naturally; it's not artificial labour and they didn't wait until it became second nature! So, even in the world of animals, the *most natural* world of life one can think of, traces of design inevitably follow from some form of intelligence. We no longer need William Paley's 'artificial' example; the bee has done the job for us.

Signs of intelligent design not only point to cosmological order but also accentuate an underlying teleological meaning[(1)]. "Once we see, however, that the probability of life originating at random is so utterly minuscule as to make the random concept absurd", maintains Hoyle "it becomes sensible to think that the favourable properties of physics on which life depends are in every respect deliberate"[(2)].

Not very long ago, many evolutionists regarded 'intelligent design' a religious nonsense raised to account for unexplainable gaps in the story of creation, hence the derogatory notion: 'God of the gaps'[(3)]. But since then, views have changed dramatically and evolutionists today, as evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould once remarked, are

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(1) Gregory Bateson (1904-1980), the renowned anthropologist and social scientist, observed that "even Darwin wrote from time to time about natural selection in phrases which almost ascribed to this process the characteristics of transcendence and purpose" (Bateson, G. (2000) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, University of Chicago Press, p. 472).

(2) Hoyle, F. & Wickramasinehe N.C. (1981) *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism*. Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster, Inc. New York. 141.

(3) The term was coined to describe "the tendency to postulate divine action simply to fill up the gaps in scientific knowledge, for example in the detail of evolutionary mechanisms". (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn, p. 159, Oxford University Press, 1996). When theists hold on to their belief, they're hastily accused of "wishful thinking, escapism, and hopes for peace of mind", relates Huston Smith. (Smith, Huston (2000) *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, HarperCollins, p. 31)

on a par with creationists in accepting 'intelligent design' as self-evident fact[1].

The strongest argument – and indeed the most manifest and accessible to humanity across the ages[2] - that can be levelled against theories of chance and Darwinian speculation is the 'Anthropic Teleological Argument'. The argument propounds that the fundamental qualities and critical physical characteristics of our universe have been fine-tuned or conditioned in such a way as to ultimately permit and sustain the existence of intelligent beings like us. The argument is further corroborated by two undeniable facts:

- Humans enjoy a highly sophisticated capacity to observe, explore, and quantify.

And,

- The universe exists in a manner that lends itself to *human* observation, exploration, and quantification.

As Paul Davies, cosmologist and director of the Beyond Center at Arizona State University, lucidly puts it:

"The world is both rational and intelligible. This is often expressed as the "principle of sufficient reason", which states that everything in the world is at is for some reason"[3].

A fact which still represents a nightmare for many atheistic evolutionists is the clear distinction that can be made between the one ultimate cause of a natural process and the process or mechanism itself. The Islamic thinker Wahiduddin Khan perceptively pinpoints where evolution is at fault:

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[1] Gould, S. J. (1971) D'Arcy Thompson and the Science of Form, *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Form and Its Alternatives, (Winter), p. 232, Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

[2] John D. Barrow said that arguers for intelligent design had prominently drawn their "examples from the marvelous adaptations evident in the natural world...tailor-made for the creatures that were to be found in it"; therefore their arguments were "graphic and easy to appreciate". (Barrow, John. D. (2005) *Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation*, Vintage Books, p. 118).

[3] Davies, Paul (1992) *The Mind of God: Science & the Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Penguin, p. 162.

"Think of the railway engine speeding along the track. How do its wheels revolve? If we attempt to answer this question by studying the different parts of the engine and their movements, we shall arrive at the conclusion that the movement of the wheels is an extension of the functioning of the locomotive's mechanism. But would we be justified in believing that the (prime) reason for their movement is the engine and its various parts? Obviously, we would not. We should first have to consider the respective roles of the engineer who designed the engine and the engine driver who set it in motion. Without their instrumentality, the engine could neither exist, nor move. The engine and its parts are not then the final reality. The final reality is the mind which has brought the engine into existence, and runs it at will"[1].

Terms such as adaptation, natural selection, and genetic mutation do not daunt the *learned* Muslims, who are well-acquainted with the Quran and the meanings of Allah's Attributes, The All-Wise (*Al-Hakeem*), The Originator of everything, including the laws of evolution for:

"Without God, evolution, continuity of nature, natural selection, conservation of energy, or whatever other phrases happen to have currency for the hour, are mere sound and smoke, and imaginations of science falsely so called"[2].

The fact that we can speak of living cells, for example, as containing "pumps, levers, motors, rotors, turbines, propellers, scissors, and many other instruments familiar from a human workshop"[3] must not escape serious contemplation. Why are we capable of both observing and naming such phenomena, even at such infinitesimal scales, so conveniently? This

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[1] Khan, Wahiduddin M. (2002) *Religion and Science*, Goodword Books, p. 49-50.
[2] Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 253.
[3] Davies, P. (2007) *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why is the Universe Just Right for Life?*, Penguin, p. 218.

effective ability to transfer daily language into the realm of extrapersonal realities, such as that of science, is clear evidence that human experience and the cosmos are not only significantly interrelated but also deliberately destined to coexist meaningfully. This conclusion is so self-evident that any attempt to invoke fortuitism would be utterly absurd. Those who wish to stick their heads in the sand will see nothing but dark. Those who are passionately after the signs, after truth, will effortlessly fail to see nothing but light.

This meaningful relationship between the explorer and the explored, the discoverer and the discovered, the observer and the observed, compels us to believe in a 'Grand Will' behind the scheme of things. Indeed, we not only live in the appropriate planet but also exist in a hospitable universe. Let us consult the language of facts and let this be from the vital function of universal constants. If, for instance, Planck's constant had a slightly different value, "the whole universe would be different from the way it is, which means that intelligent life (human beings) could not have evolved in a substantially altered universe. If gravity were significantly stronger than it is, stars would exhaust their hydrogen fuels much faster, and humanoid life (as we know it) could not appear in a universe where stars "died young". Or if the 'strong force', which binds the nuclei of atoms together, were stronger, helium nuclei would dominate the universe, and no hydrogen would be left over, and without hydrogen there would be no water, and without water there could not be life as we know it"[(1)].

To round off the Anthropic argument, let's quote Bruno Guiderdoni, a French astronomer who embraced Islam several years ago. He says:

[(1)] Betty L. & Cordell B. (2001) The Anthropic Teleological Argument (edit.). In Peterson, M. Et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 221; also see: Barrow, John D. (2003) *The Constants of Nature*, Vintage Books, p. 141.

"Historically, the vastness of the cosmos has been used as an argument against religion; the argument goes that if the cosmos is so extended, man is nothing and the concept of a revealed religion on the small planet where we are living has no sense. We now know that the age of the universe and the size of the observable universe are intimately linked to our presence on earth. We could not have appeared in a cosmos with a different age and size. The old age of the universe is necessary for heavy element enrichment, which is necessary for the formation of planets and the appearance of life. The size of the universe is a consequence of its age, and so we need this space around us and this time behind us in order to be here now on earth"[(1)].

In their analysis of the Anthropic Teleological Argument, L. Stafford Betty & Bruce Cordell conclude:

"...the Anthropic principle presents us with a potentially powerful argument for the existence of a universal creating intelligence"[(2)].

However, to reject evolution entirely would certainly make a fine example of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Whether we like it or not evolution is a fact of life, but what kind of evolution are we talking about here? Countless phenomena display various forms of evolution, from language, culture, ideologies, economical systems, to genes, organisms, the solar system, and galaxies. All these have undergone – across the ages – numerous kinds of evolution. By and large, the Quran does not reject evolution conceived this way. In fact, it is stated in the Quran that humans were created in different stages[(3)], and that human beings shall move from one

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(1) Guiderdoni, Bruno (2001) Reading God's Signs. In *Faith in Science: Scientists search for truth*, Edited by W. Mark Richardson and Gordy Slack, Routledge, London and New York, p.75.

(2) Betty, L. & Cordell, B. (2001) The Anthropic Teleological Argument. In Peterson, M. Et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 224.

(3) Quran: 71: 13-14.

stage to another[1]. Moreover, one of Allah's Names, frequently invoked by Muslims in their prayers, is 'Al-Baari' (Quran: 59: 23-24)[2] which roughly means the One who evolves things from their beginnings towards their final existence. The Quran also speaks of a battery of laws such as the law of *Tasreef* (change)[3] as well as *Taqleeb* (alteration)[4], *Tadbeer* (proper disposition of affairs)[5], *Hisaab* (calculation)[6], *Ihssaa* (enumeration)[7], and *Halaak* (annihilation)[8]. From the Islamic viewpoint, change is a fundamental feature of life. Heraclitus' quote that "change is the only constant" and which happens to bear a lot of truth is endorsed by the Quran. However, it should be noted that evolution is more than just change and many of its aspects and mechanisms no doubt exhibit extreme complexity at various levels and stages. But why should evolution lead to the exclusion of design when it is equally (and in fact more) convincing to attribute the evolution of life and the cosmos to the Will of a Higher Intelligence. Well put by H. D. Barrows:

"Is it not more reasonable to believe that the differentiation of species and the evolution of higher forms from lower during all the many stages thereof, was directed, determined and effected by Intelligence, utilizing, always, natural means and forces, to bring about natural, but ever purposeful results, than to believe that those results could have been produced by accident, or by the blind bias of unconscious matter; or, by the eccentric action of irresponsible and unintelligent force; or,

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(1) Quran: 84: 19.
(2) See Abdullah Yusif Ali's translation of the Quran.
(3) Quran: 25:50; 2:164.
(4) Quran: 24:44.
(5) Quran: 10:3; 10:31; 13:2.
(6) Quran: 9:96; 10:5.
(7) Quran: 78:29.
(8) Quran: 28:88.

finally, by the inconceivably improbable method of "a fortuitous concourse of atoms?"[1].

At this point, I think it is important to stop for a while and show where Islam and evolution are perfectly compatible. As mentioned earlier, Islam and evolution, in its broadest sense, are demonstrably compatible. Now we need to explain how Islam is compatible with many of the fundamental notions proposed by evolution in the Darwinian sense. According to the Quran (28:68), Allah does two things: He creates what He wills and He selects from His creation. The word connoting 'selection' is the Arabic verb '*Yakhtaar*', which means to choose or select. It is worth noting that the two verbs denoting Allah's act of creating and selecting are used in the present tense: *Yahkluq* (creates) and *Yakhtaar* (selects/chooses), hence underscoring two manifestations of Allah's ceaseless involvement in the affairs of the universe. Thus, Islam does not reject the concept of selection which is utterly central to evolutionary theory. It only rejects the claim that selection is solely nature's invention, therefore the assumption that God is irrelevant. Selection, however, is not really 'random', although many biology books are notoriously known for using this adjective without reservation.

When biologists say 'random' they mean that for some 'unknown or unapparent' reason the genetic information guiding natural selection is continuously changing. They know that change is happening and has a job to do but they cannot explain the sudden shifts in genetic information and how they predispose selection to behave in a certain way.

Let's talk a little about the notion of *genetic information*, the amazing instructions that guide selection through space and time[2]. Again, this bit does not go without mention in the Quran. In chapter 20 verse 50, it is stated that in addition to

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[1] Barrows, H.D. (1904) *Cosmos or Chaos? Theism, or Atheism?* p. 14.
[2] Maynard, J. & Szathmáry, E. (1999) *The Origins of Life*, Oxford University Press, p. 2.

Allah giving everything its creation (i.e. its form and nature), He has also given everything 'Huda' (i.e. guidance, direction)[1]. In its essence, natural selection is a perfect example of informational guidance and, according to the Quran, such information is encoded and embedded for nature's convenience. Interestingly, the very word 'guidance' - the literal equivalent of 'Huda' in Arabic - has been reiterated by Darwin in his *Descent of Man* more than 34 times[2] [3].

Gregory Bateson, the renowned anthropologist and social scientist, and known for his pioneering work on cybernetic systems, viewed "all the systems of the living natural world as being minds or mental processes"[4]. Although such minds, claims Bateson, may not be conscious, "they function as the 'informational drivers' of the living systems that exist at every scale from the tiny components of biological 'cells' to the great

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[1] Look up Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran, one of the most authoritative ones.

[2] For example see pp. 57, 66, 98, 104, and 122 in: Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics. **The notion of 'guidance' has vital implications for design**, primarily that there's no such thing as pure chance or chaos in nature. "There is no juxtaposition of law and chance", says Neil Ormerod "…chance is itself subject to a certain type lawfulness, a statistical lawfulness whose outcomes, in the long run, can be predicted with some certainty" (Ormerod, Neil (2005) Chance and Necessity, Providence and God, *Irish Theological Quarterly*; 70; p. 272). George Williams, in his essential critique *Adaptation and Natural Selection*, has also realized that "even the most chaotically disorganized system may have a precise statistical organization". (Williams, G. (1996) *Adaptation and Natural Selection: A Critique of Some Current Evolutionary Thought*, Princeton University Press, p. 256-257). In fact, Erwin Schrödinger sees in "the unfolding of events in the life cycle of an organism...an admirable regularity and orderliness, unrivalled by anything we meet with in inanimate matter" (Schrödinger, E. (1992) *What is Life*? Cambridge University Press, p. 76).

[3] **In all sincerity**, I must say that had it not been for many of Darwin's insights, much of our ignorance concerning the science of life would have persisted till this very moment.

[4] Noel, C. (2008) *Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty, and the Sacred Earth*, State University of New York Press, p. 5.

ecosystems and the vast processes of evolution"[1]. The basic ideas in this interpretation of life very much border on this vital concept of *Hidaayah* (guidance) mentioned in the Quran (20:50)[2]. This concept depicts all matter, living and nonliving, as being equipped with a 'guiding' consciousness of some kind that *navigates* them through various historical trajectories.

What Islam rejects about evolution, however, is the assumption that contingent life is self-creating or self-guiding, for how could an intrinsically contingent system owe its very existence to nothing external at all? This is a palpable absurdity. That would, as John Blackie has eloquently pointed out, resemble the assertion that reason has evolved out of unreason, or "order out of confusion, light out of darkness, fire out of frost, or the positive in any shape out of mere blind negations"[3]. To recapitulate, Islam categorically rejects three evolutionary propositions:

- The proposition that Allah and evolution are mutually exclusive; that we must choose between Darwinism and creation[4]. Carl Zimmer nicely puts it that "God and evolution

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] The 14th century Attufi, in his three-volume *Isharaat*, interprets the verse as: "(Allah) gave everything its 'Khalq', meaning form and structure, and then 'Huda', meaning guidance, either though minds as in the case of humans or through instinct]Darwin has dedicated an entire section on instinct and gave the example of bees[as in the case of bees building their hives and spiders weaving their webs or any other organism (whose guidance is through instinct)" (See Attufi, Najmu-ddin (2002) *Al-Isharaat Al-Ilahiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 8). The great exegete and linguist, Ibn-Atiyyah (circa 1088- 1151), looked at the general meaning of 'Huda' and laconically suggested, "…guided everything to what suits its nature" (See Ibn-Attyiah (2007) *Al-Muhararul-Wajeez*, Qatar, Vol. 8, p. 99).

[3] Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 236.

[4] Haught, J. F. (2006) Darwin, Design, and Divine Providence. In *Debating Design From Darwin to DNA*, (edit.)William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse, Cambridge University Press, p. 229. Kenneth R. Miller and Francis Collins, two prominent scientists, have shown that

are not mutually exclusive. Evolution is a scientific phenomenon, one that scientists can study because it is observable and predictable. But digging up fossils does not disprove the existence of God or a higher purpose for the universe. That is beyond science's power"[1].

- The proposition that future things, beings, or states are necessarily better or more prefect than past ones whether on the basis of *linear* or *non-linear* evolutionary progress[2].

- The proposition that humans are the descendents of pre-human or barely humanoid species, a proposition which stands on dubitable evidence, sheer speculation and fails miserably to account for the so-called missing link(s). (Of course anyone familiar with the subject will recall Haeckel's fraudulent drawings)[3].

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evolution, given its true size, and God are not incompatible. The crux of their arguments is that although evolutionary laws are apparently self-driven, still there is nothing intrinsically illogical about believing in a God who equips such laws with (quasi)autonomous power. This view coincides with the Quran, where it is stated that Allah has given everything its own creation and then gave it guidance (Quran: 20:49), and part of that guidance is to give the laws some degree of autonomy.

[1] Zimmer, Carl (2001) *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea from Darwin to DNA*, Arrow Books, p. 414.

[2] I have mentioned earlier that many evolutionists have changed their minds regarding this point. According to John Stewart, "The great majority of the leading evolutionary theorists who attended a major international conference on evolutionary progress in 1988 opposed the view that evolution is progressive and that humans are at the leading edge of evolution on this planet". (Stewart, John (2000) *Evolution's Arrow: The Direction of Evolution and the Future of Humanity*. The Chapman Press, p. 160: notes and references).

[3] This is a long story but I'll cut it short. Haeckel sketched drawings of several different embryos (human and non-human embryos) showing incredible similarity in their early “tailbud” stage. "Within months of the publication of Haeckel’s work in 1868", relates Jonathan Sarfati "L. Rtimeyer, professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of Basel, showed it to be fraudulent. William His Sr., professor of anatomy at the University of Leipzig, and a famous comparative embryologist, corroborated Rtimeyer’s criticisms. These scientists showed that Haeckel fraudulently modified his drawings of embryos to make them look more alike" (See Sarfati, J. (2002)

Primates, Hominids, or Humans?

> "Every trick of habit and every reminiscent thought was traced back to some mammalian or reptilian monster; even such insignificant facts as that the hair on a man's wrist lay in a certain direction were sufficient to link him with simian ancestry; and daily search was made for the 'missing link' ".
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> (More, Louis: 1925)[1]

The escalating controversy surrounding the simian lineage in human ancestry provoked the 19th century zoologist Pierre-Paul Grassé to write:

"There are many psychologists who today see in man nothing more than a chimpanzee, marginally more artful than the other primates. They humanize the apes and animalize man…according to these psychologists, all human conduct exists in a state that is either dissimulated by appearances, or broadly outlined in the behavior of the anthropoids"[2].

When vestiges of the so-called Ramapithecus were first discovered, every possible effort was made to reconstruct them into any hominid form. Now, palaeontologists are almost agreed that it should belong to the pongid (primate) family[3].

Refuting Evolution 2: Sequel. USA, p. 200). Haeckel's science would better be labelled 'racial science'. According to Carl Zimmer, Haeckel decided that some humans were more progressive than others and divided them into 12 different species, ranking them from lowest to highest. At the bottom of list came the various species of Africans while at the very summit were Europeans (Zimmer, C. (2001) *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea from Darwin to DNA*, p. 385).

(1) More, Louis T. (1925) *The Dogma of Evolution*, Princeton University Press, p. 21.

(2) Quoted in: Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science and the Holy Scriptures*, New Delhi, p. 109.

(3) The same happened when the first Oreopithecus was discovered. It turned out to be a fossilized ape.

The only hominids which appear to bear some conspicuous resemblances to Homo sapiens (modern man) are consecutively: the early Australopithecus, the Pithecanthropus, and the Neanderthal. Even these three have been classified independently – by the French palaeontologist E. Genet-Varcin and others - as having no common genealogy that can hitherto be confirmed. There is no scarp of *sound* evidence that modern man has descended from a common origin with any of the aforementioned hominids[(1)], let alone descend from primate ancestry[(2)]. In this regard, Bucaille wrote:

"The independence of the four waves of hominids from a very early stage seems doubly certain due to the fact that no fossils have ever been found that indicate the existence of a common archaic breed"[(3)].

Bucaille's view coincides with Austin Clark's general assertion that all major phyla have always existed independently, including the human phylum (or genus). Austin argued that:

"Since all our evidence shows that the phyla or major groups of animals have maintained precisely the same relation with each other back **to the time when the first evidences of life appear**, it is much more logical to assume a continuation of these parallel interrelationships **further back into the indefinite past, to the time of the first beginnings of life**, than it is to assume somewhere in early pre-Cambrian times a change in these interrelationships and a convergence toward a hypothetical common ancestral type from which all were

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(1) Ciochon, Russell L. & Fleagle, John G. (1987) *Primate Evolution and Human Origins*, p. 238.

(2) Clark, Austin H. (1930) *The New Evolution: Zoogensis*, The Williams & Welkins Company, p. 224. Another fallacy, demonstrably based on dubitable evidence, is that of coming up with the Anthropoid genus, where humans, primates, and the rest of the hominids are crammed in one subgroup.

(3) Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man: The Answers of Science and the Holy scriptures*. New Delhi, p. 98.

derived. This last assumption has not the slightest evidence to support it. **All of the evidence indicates the truth of the first assumption**"[1].

Well-documented fossils from the Cambrian age illustriously indicate a sudden emergence of complex multicellular forms of life. To deal a further blow, such anatomically complex creatures had "no direct, simpler precursors in the fossil record of Precambrian times"[2]. Confronted with such formidable facts, Darwin wholeheartedly acknowledged:

"Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory"[3].

Darwin's subsequent die-hard attempts to reconcile evolutionary implications and the sudden appearance of complex multicellular life proved unsuccessful. The absence of life, as far as we can tell, during most of the earth's history, and "its subsequent appearance at full complexity"[4], forcefully finds its most plausible explanation in the act of Creation and not in Darwin's evolutionary model[5]. Roderick Impey Murchison, the great geologist who first mapped out the record of early life, and writing 5 years before Darwin's *Origin of Species*, "explicitly identified the Cambrian

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[1] Clark, Austin H. (1930) *The New Evolution: Zoogensis*, The Williams & Welkins Company, p. 104. (Emphasis mine)

[2] Gould, S. J. (2000) *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, Vintage Books, p. 56.

[3] Darwin, Charles (1998) *The Origin of the Species*, Wordsworth Edition, p. 213.

[4] Gould S. J. (2000): p, 56.

[5] **But this does not mean** that Allah created life from nothing, from no preceding properties of any kind. According to the Quran, Allah "*causes the living to originate from the nonliving and the nonliving from the living*" (Quran: 3:27, 6: 95 &10:3) in an endless cycle of creation, for He, Allah, is *Al-Khallaaq* (Quran: 15:86), meaning, among other meanings, the One whose act of creating is continuous.

explosion as a disproof of evolution"[1]. Murchison, commenting on his important findings, assuredly recounted:

"The earliest signs of living things, announcing as they do a high complexity of organization, entirely exclude the hypothesis of a transmutation from lower to higher grades of being. The first fiat of Creation which went forth, doubtlessly ensured the perfect adaptation of animals to the surrounding media; and thus, whilst the geologist recognizes a beginning, he can see in the innumerable facets of the eye of the earliest crustacean, the same evidences of Omniscience as in the completion of the vertebrate form"[2].

When E. Genet-Varcin worked on her phylogenetic taxonomy of hominids, she gave Homo sapiens an independent genealogy, traced back to an indefinite origin[3]. The sudden appearance of Homo sapiens (modern man), existing with no confirmable relation to any of the so-called hominids[4], remains one of the most intriguing events in evolutionary history. The sudden emergence of modern man was concomitant with an arsenal of highly sophisticated cognitive, emotional, and behavioural patterns at his disposal. Some experts have also associated this era with an abrupt birth of metaphysical and religious tendencies for which no evidence of something similar could be found among the other species.

The fact that man is a unique creation not only corroborates the revelation of the scriptures but also defies the desperate attempts of pseudo-science to disprove it. "The impact of evolutionary thinking has been to challenge whether humans

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(1) Gould S. J. (2000): p. 56.
(2) Murchison, R. I. (1854) *Siluria: the History of the Oldest Known Rocks Containing Organic Remains*, London, p. 469.
(3) Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science and the Holy Scriptures*, New Delhi, p. 96-98.
(4) *Ibid*.

are unique", wrote Roger Lewin and Robert Foley who conclude:

"The fact that there is currently only one species of hominin becomes a matter of major theoretical interest"[1].

Just to get an idea of the ever-growing controversy surrounding human origin, recent evolutionary theorists are debating whether certain aspects of human behaviour could be associated with social carnivores - lions and hyenas - or marine mammals, instead of modelling them against primates[2].

Indeed, with regards to man's origin, 'missing links' are known to be Darwinism's weak link. "Fossils were another problem for Darwin, and largely missing from the *Descent of Man*"[3], wrote Moore and Desmond, two acclaimed biographers of Darwin[4]. Since Darwin's times, we have no 'reliable' record of any series of fossils which could bring the ongoing controversies in this subject to an end. However, we can be doubly assured that there is a lot of desperate cut-and-paste work going on in this area till this very moment.

After all, the theory that man had originally descended from an apelike ancestor is by far no fact and does not even bear the hallmarks of principled science. Zoologist Austin Clark has settled it from the beginning:

"Man is not an ape, and in spite of the similarity between them there is not the slightest evidence that man is descended from an ape"[5].

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(1) Lewin, R. & Foley, R. (2004) *Principles of Human Evolution*, Blackwell Publishing, p. 55.
(2) *Ibid*: p. 177.
(3) Darwin describes this missing link as a "great break" and further admits that "it cannot be bridged over by any extinct or living species" (Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 183)
(4) *Ibid*: p. 36.
(5) Clark, Austin H. (1930) *The New Evolution: Zoogensis*, The Williams & Welkins Company, p. 224.

Primordial Soup Revisited

In their analysis of the building blocks of life, biologists Miller and Lazcano conclude:

"Yet for all the uncertainties surrounding the emergence of life, the formation of a primordial organic soup is one of the most firmly established events in Earth‘s history"[(1)].

Where does Islam stand with regards to the primordial soup hypothesis? A simple and brief answer to this question – if PS had ever existed – would be as follows: if primordial soup stands for the primeval physicochemical conditions necessary for life to exist, then Islam, broadly speaking, has no objection to this hypothesis. By dismissing the questionable details surrounding this hypothesis, it becomes apparent, as will be shown, that Islam is compatible with the general implications of PS.

According to the Quran, Allah began the creation of man from *Teen* (Quran: 32:7), which roughly means mud[(2)], and the proposed primordial soup, in simple language, is the combination of water, earth matter, and atmospheric properties. In this general sense, *Teen* and primordial soup have very much in common[(3)]. The Quran unequivocally states that humans were caused to evolve (i.e. gradually grow) from such Teen:

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(1) Miller, Stanley and Lazcano, Antonio (2002) Formation of the Building Blocks of Life. In *Origin: The Beginnings of Biological Evolution*, edited by Schopf, J. William, University of California Press, p. 109.

(2) The word *Teen* is sometimes mistranslated into 'clay', which is more or less the equivalent of *Salsal*, another term in the Quran used to denote a later stage in the process of human creation.

(3) Real contradiction between the Quran and the hypothesis in question arises when primordial physicochemical properties are said to be purely accidental or solely sufficient for explaining the origins of life.

"Allah has caused you to grow from the earth, and then He will return you into it, and then bring you out (on the Day of Resurrection)"[1].

Concerning human origin, other verses mention further restrictions and speak of a special property of *Teen* called *Lazib* (Quran: 37:11) , hence the noun phrase *Teen Lazib*, meaning pure adhesive mud, the kind one would imagine when thinking of slime. Interestingly, the Arabic noun phrase just mentioned has inspired the renowned eighth century Muslim scholar, Ibnu Jareeri Attabari, to propose that the human body was the joint production of water, fire (energy/heat in modern terms), air (atmospheric properties), and *Turaab* or earth matter[2]. This is a very good guess compared to the scientific knowledge available at the time.

Lawrence J. Henderson, the prominent biochemist of the twentieth century, expressed these in technical terms, showing that chemical compounds containing carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen possessed unique properties which, in turn, were ideal sources of matter and energy for metabolism, complex structures, and a means of establishing complex functions[3]. Henderson summarizes:

"Water, carbonic acid, and their constituent elements manifest great fitness for their biological role"[4].

This simply means that without earth matter and water – two sources rich in vital elements for biochemical evolution - life as we know it would have been impossible. The fact that water is a crucial necessity for life has been stated unequivocally by the Quran:

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[1] Quran: 71:17.
[2] Attabari, Ibnu Jareer (2003) *Jami'ul Bayan Fi Tafsirul Qur'an*, Vol. 19, p. 510. Edit. Dr. Abdullah Atturki.
[3] Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p. 269-270.
[4] *Ibid*: p. 268.

"Allah has created every moving creature from water"[1].

"And out of water have we made every living thing"[2].

We mustn't underestimate the importance attached to water in the Quran for that is what science continues to reveal. Henderson wrote:

"It seems, therefore, almost safe to say, on the basis of its thermal properties alone, that water is the one fit substance for its place in the process of universal evolution, when we regard that process biocentrically"[3].

Just divest scientific jargon of its technical gown and it shouldn't be difficult to see points of agreement. Some believers may hesitate or refuse to accept such pro-Quranic interpretations because of their apparent irreconcilability with the literal understanding of some verses in the Quran, namely that Adam was the product of Allah's hand. But this is primarily a problem of failing to grasp the nature of Allah's actions, which in fact will always remain ungraspable. It might be useful to recall the 'incomparability and uniqueness' of the Attributes whereby it's possible to

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[1] Quran: 24: 45.
[2] Quran: 21:30.
[3] Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p. 110.

understand the meaning of an Attribute but also impossible to grasp its nature[1].

Many verses can be cited where Allah is the ultimate Doer of something, such as Allah sending the wind (Quran: 7: 57) or creating cattle for the benefit of mankind (Quran: 36:71). Here too Allah is not invoked to fill gaps or rationalize naiveté. The Quran attributes a vital role to the intermediary function of natural causes which are also embedded in the vast body of creation. Consider for example the Quran's explication of stages leading to cloud formation:

> "Have you not seen how Allah makes the clouds move gently, then joins them together, then arranges them into stacks, and then you see rain coming forth from therein...?" [2].

One may also refer to the Quran's detailed exposition of key microscopic stages in the development of the human embryo (See 'The Quran on Human Origin' in this chapter).

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[1] "Seek cure, for Allah has not created a disease but created its cure, some of us know it, some of us don't", says the Prophet Mohammad. This often-quoted Hadith seamlessly reconciles two contending views: belief in the Creator and belief in science or natural explanations. Atheistic scientists, chiefly those with firm evolutionary convictions, assert that science has explained the causes of health and disease and therefore to invoke God as an explanation is not only unneeded but also irrational. The other camp, which also stampedes towards the opposite extreme, invokes God in everything to the point of denying natural causes or acknowledging them but, at the same time, depriving them of any power or effect. The Hadith above speaks for itself: people must concede to science's explanatory power yet believe that science, nature, and the universe owe their existence to Allah. Needless to say, the literal command to 'seek cure' is a command to believe in both the utility of natural explanations and the efficacy of natural causes. Ibn-Taimiyyah recapitulates: "To deny that causes are really causes is a lack in reason and to completely turn away from considering the causes is to distrust the religion (Islam)" (*The Collection of Fataawa*: Vol. 8, p. 169).

[2] Quran: 24:43.

In the end, primordial soup is just a hypothesis which, according to several researchers, only provides the faintest idea about the origins of life. Recently, evolutionary biologist William Martin and a team of researchers have supplied evidence showing that "soup has no capacity for producing the energy vital for life"[(1)] .

"It is time to cast off the shackles of fermentation in some primordial soup as 'life without oxygen'- an idea that dates back to a time before anybody in biology had any understanding of how ATP is made", adds team leader Dr. Nick Lane from University College London[(2)].

Notwithstanding many of his contentious views on the origins of life, neuropsychologist Rhawn Joseph, joining a legion of scientists, also concludes:

> "The likelihood that life on Earth began in an organic soup is the equivalent of discovering a computer on Mars and claiming it was randomly assembled in the methane sea"[(3)].

A Reality Check

Before moving on, let us see how much we have advanced in our quest for an ultimate explanation. Epistemologically, any scientific paradigm that seeks to investigate a given phenomenon should attain two levels of adequacy. On one level, the paradigm should attain *descriptive adequacy*. That is, it should span all relevant data about the phenomenon in question. On the other level, the paradigm should attain *explanatory adequacy*. That is, it should analyze, explain, and synthesize all relevant data obtained via descriptive adequacy.

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(1) New Research Rejects 80-Year Theory of 'Primordial Soup' as the Origin of Life. *Science Daily*, Feb., 3, 2010.
(2) *Ibid*.
(3) Joseph, R. (2009) Life on Earth Came from other Planets. *Journal of Cosmology*, 1, 1-56.

The problem facing science is the paucity of reliable data known thus far on the actual beginning of the universe, let alone its entire nature (e.g. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle has proved that it is impossible to know *precisely* and *simultaneously* all the details at the subatomic level, Gödel's *Incompleteness Theorem* dealt a further blow because it demonstrated that our logical formulations will always remain in need of external validation), let alone the possibility of existing universes with fundamentally different physical properties. It can be assuredly maintained that science is light-years away from attaining descriptive adequacy, not to mention explanatory adequacy. As Rushton Coulborn forecasted in 1944:

"Man does not at present know all of nature, he does not know whether he is capable of knowing all of nature, or whether he ever will know all of nature. He has, I think, a bad habit of assuming that he is capable of knowing all of nature - that he is physically so endowed that he may someday have objective knowledge of all of nature"[(1)].

What is it that concerns us most: why do we exist and what is the meaning of life or how did we exist and what are we made of? 'Why' questions catch our attention immediately. The vast majority of people – if not all - need to know 'why'. They deeply feel, as Albert Einstein famously put it, that "the rest are details". The answers to the 'what' question can tell us what caused the hole in the ozone layer but cannot explain nor justify the moral urgency to reduce harmful emissions.

Despite his ingenious *Consilience*, Wilson's bold assertion that human beings will never understand who they are and why they're here until they have unified enough certain knowledge[(2)] throws us all into despair.

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(1) Coulborn, Rushton (1944) The Meaning of History. *Ethics*, Vol. 55, No. 1, (Oct.), p. 46; Published by: The University of Chicago Press.
(2) Wilson, Edward O. (1999) *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, Vintage Books, New York, p. 7.

How long does it take to understand Allah's manifest and ubiquitous signs? What and how much do we need to know in order to find the answers we need most? Do we really have to wait until countless millennia have elapsed in order to understand who we are and why we are here? If the ultimate truth is simple, universal, and accessible to all - if one intends to accept the Islamic viewpoint - do we have to writhe in ignorance for millions of years before we find the answers to the most profound questions? Imagine these were God's standards, what would that imply? Certainly all sorts of negative assumptions: that God made the road to truth thorny, difficult, and extremely esoteric[1]; that He is gratuitously selective because past generations will have passed away before knowing anything about the truth while generations at the far end of future will be the privileged ones; that He does not know his people's needs and his message has not been clear and simple enough from the start, etc. In this connection, the reader can revisit our discussion of *conventional religion* at the beginning of the book. There we have made the point that man is responsible for victimizing *true religion* - through distortion, misinterpretation, invention, or rejection - and manipulating it to serve his own ends.

As a consequence, God's identity sustained gross misrepresentations and the road to knowing Him became extremely vague and tortuous.

Suppose we side with Wilson's assertion above, then how much reliable knowledge do we have about the initial state of the universe?[2] How certain are we about the origin of our own selves?

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[1] Or in Andrew Collier's words, that "God deliberately tampered with the evidence for his existence in order to keep us guessing" (Collier, A. (1999) *Being and Worth*, Routledge, p. 45).

[2] In this regard, Steven Weinberg wrote, "Thus, the universe preserves only a very limited memory of its initial conditions. This is a pity, if what we want is to reconstruct the very beginning". (*The First Three Minutes: A modem view of the origin of the universe*, Steven

"Neither have I (Allah) made them (mankind) witness the creation of the heavens and earth nor witness the creation of their own selves"[1].

In line with the latter verse, some scientists have come to realize that "since there were no human witnesses to the earth's past…all statements about that past, including evolution are *pure* speculation"[2].

Concerning the origin of the universe and how it bears on the meaning of life, Steven Weinberg candidly wrote:

"I have to admit that, even when physicists will have gone as far as they can go, when we have a final theory, we will not have a completely satisfying picture of the world, because we will still be left with the question "why?" Why this theory, rather than some other theory? So there seems to be an irreducible mystery that science will not eliminate"[3].

According to the Quran, all scientific endeavours, all human undertakings, are only tiny bubbles on the vast ocean of reality:

"They only know the outwardness of the present life, but of the End of things they are oblivious"[4].

Weinberg, Fontana Paperbacks, 1976, p. 63). Paul Davies has also maintained that 'the problem of the ultimate origin of the physical universe lies on the boundary of science. Indeed, many scientists would say it lies beyond the scope of science altogether". (*The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative ability to Order the Universe*, Paul Davies, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia & London, 2004, p.4)

[1] Quran: 18: 51.

[2] Miller, Kenneth R. (2007) *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*, Harper Perennial, p. 22.

[3] Weinberg, S. (1999) A Designer Universe? *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 46, No. 16, Oct. 21, 1999.

[4] Quran: 30:7.

Before exiting, I would like to give readers a clue of the blunders that are most likely to arise from extravagant theorizing. Consider this passage from Dawkins' *Blind Watchmaker*, exorbitantly praised as '…the most important book since Darwin':

> "Any god capable of intelligently designing something as complex as the DNA/protein replicating machine must have been at least as complex and organized as that machine itself"[(1)].

This argument is blatantly flawed and only those lacking in 'layman intelligence' would allow such sophistry to sneak into their heads. Two substantive assertions are presumptuously advanced here. First, the above argument arbitrarily[(2)] runs a necessary correlation between complexity and intelligence. The more intelligent an agent is, whatever agent, the more complex we should expect to find it. There's no evidence, logical or empirical, proving the generalizable character of such a proposition. Allah, according to Dawkins, is, at least, as complex as the DNA/protein. So Dawkins, like his ancient Darwin, obtains his knowledge of the Deity through analogies from natural experience. When similar analogies are invoked to establish theistic arguments from Design, Dawkins is infuriated. Why the double-standards?

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(1) Dawkins, R. (2006) *The Blind Watchmaker*, Penguin, p. 141.

(2) This also reminds me of Darwin's arbitrary and prejudiced claim that 'uneducated people' are incapable of "admiring such scenes as the heavens at night" or "a beautiful landscape" (Darwin, C. (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 116).

Secondly, Dawkins grandiosely passes assertive statements about the nature of divine knowledge/intelligence before telling us, *in clear-cut language*, what intelligence, consciousness, and knowledge are. Science is completely ignorant as to the exact nature of such things and they are 'things' because they just refuse to lend themselves to exhaustive definitions. Darwin himself faced this formidable difficulty. When he commenced a section on various mammalian mental faculties, he admitted:

"It would be very difficult for anyone *with even much more knowledge than I possess*, to determine how far animals exhibit any traces of these high mental powers. This difficulty arises *from the impossibility of judging* what passes through the mind of an animal; and again, the fact that *writers differ to a great extent in the meaning which they attribute to the above terms, causes a further difficulty*"[(1)].

Unlike Darwin, Dawkins' extraordinary speculative powers allow him to penetrate the heavens and report his chimerical findings on divine intelligence but this time within the context of 'organized complexity'! Indeed, "*among mankind are those who dispute about Allah without knowledge*"(Quran: 31:20).

[(1)] Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 105 (emphases mine).

On Theistic Evolution

'Theistic evolution' stands for the belief that evolution and the creative act of God are compatible. Despite its novelty, the phrase is symptomatic of an irremovable yearning to religion among the scientific elites. Before we discuss it any further, let us first clarify something about Charles Darwin. In his *Decent of Man*, Darwin draws our attention to a potential error in his own theory. He was particularly puzzled by the distinctive features which mark humans unique from all the other species. He wrote:

"We have seen in the last two chapters that man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some lower form; **but it may be urged that, as man differs so greatly in his mental power from all other animals, there must be some error in this conclusion**. No doubt the difference in this respect is enormous".[(1)]

Secondly, it might come as a surprise to some that Darwin may have been a devout believer. This can be inferred from two instances. **One**: his distinction between the assumption that belief in God is *necessarily* instinctive and the assumption of whether it was necessary for the universe to have a Creator. He dismisses the former as seriously lacking in scientific evidence yet describes the latter as demonstrable. He said:

"There is no evidence that man was aboriginally endowed with the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God[(2)]…The question is of course wholly distinct from that

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(1) Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 85.

(2) Darwin may have missed the point here. It depends on what we mean by 'aboriginal'. If we mean that man is necessarily born with firm faith in God, then Darwin is right. Yet if we mean that man is born with an inclination towards theism, then Darwin is wrong. James H. Leuba (1912) and John S. Blackie (1878) cite ample evidence for monotheism as the natural religion of early man. See: Leuba (1912) *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future*, Macmillan

higher one: whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe; and this has been answered in the affirmative by some of the highest intellects that have ever existed"[1].

Second: Darwin's theistic convictions are more pronounced in his admission that he deserves "to be called a Theist"[2] and, in his reply to Asa Gray, that his views on evolution "are not at all necessarily atheistical"[3].

It may seem after all that Francis Collins, the noted Geneticist, and his proponents were not the first ones to promote theistic evolution. Charles Darwin got there first. Now Collins' case is even stronger.

Several evolutionary scientists have found it extremely hard to think of human nature in purely materialistic terms. They are no longer satisfied with the Freudian explanation which views religion as an epiphenomenon of blind naturalistic forces. These scientists are not ordinary figures or interested amateurs hasty to advance half-baked ideas on the subject. They are well-known experts who contributed significantly to their respective fields. Such names include: Francis S. Collins, the noted geneticist and the Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), Asa Gray, Darwin's chief advocate in the United States, and Theodosius Dobzhansky, the twentieth-century architect of evolutionary thinking[4].

Collins talks on behalf of a team of scientists who believe that arguing for matters of faith does not necessarily entail the

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Company; Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York.

[1] Darwin, Charles (1902) *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Vol. 1, p. 788.

[2] Darwin, Charles (1958) *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882*; Edit. Nora Barlow, London: Collins, p. 92-93.

[3] *Charles Darwin's Letters: A Selection 1825-1859*, Edit. Frederick Burkhardt, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 12.

[4] Collins, Francis S. (2006) *Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Free Press, p. 199.

diminution of science nor does loyalty to science necessarily amount to conflict with (authentic) religion. Collins' reconciliation had already revealed itself in the concept of Theistic Evolution, which simply states that evolution, with all its intricacies and delicate complexities, is the contrivance of an omnificent Creator. According to Collins, "the process of evolution and natural selection permitted the development of biological diversity and complexity" yet human beings remain "unique in ways that defy evolutionary explanation and point to our spiritual nature". "This includes", says Collins "the existence of the Moral Law (the knowledge of right and wrong) and the search for God that characterizes all human cultures throughout history". "If one accepts 'theistic evolution', adds Collins, then "an entirely plausible, intellectually satisfying, and logically consistent synthesis emerges: God, who is not limited in space or time, created the universe and established natural laws that govern it" and "seeking to populate this otherwise sterile universe with living creatures, God chose the elegant mechanism of evolution to create microbes, plants, and animals of all sorts…This view is entirely compatible with everything that science teaches us about the natural world. It is also entirely compatible with the great monotheistic religions of the world"[(1)].

Concluding his book, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, cosmologist Paul Davies asserted:

"The very fact that the universe *is* creative, and that the laws have permitted complex structures to emerge and develop to the point of consciousness—in other words, that the universe has organized its own self-awareness—**is for me powerful evidence that there is 'something going on' behind it all**. **The impression of design is overwhelming**. Science may explain all the processes whereby the universe

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(1) *Ibid*. p. 200-201.

evolves its own destiny, but that **still leaves room for there to be a meaning behind existence**"[1].

It is not difficult to detect an aura of faith in these effusive accounts. Let us just keep it in mind that, like Gould's 'punctuated equilibrium', religion will always resurface and in sudden unexpected ways!

Allah: Eternally Creative

Ibn-Taimiyyah (1263–1328), drawing upon evidence from the Quran and Sunnah, ingeniously manages to resolve the problem of "a God who was inactive prior to His decision to create, while yet rejecting the eternity of the world"[2]. The problem worried those who wanted to avoid the assumption that God and matter had eternally coexisted. The problem also assumes that God was idle prior to His decision to create the universe and this was an offensive idea because it raised many negative implications about God's nature. In solving this mind-bending problem, Ibn-Taimiyyah argued that a vital distinction had to be made.

He argued that Allah's *creative activity* was eternal and without beginning yet no *particular created object* was eternal. In other words, particular created entities that had a discrete existence of their own, such as the solar system, the galaxies, and human beings, have a beginning in time, but the series /process "of created objects has no beginning in time"[3].

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[1] Davies, Paul (2004) *The Cosmic Blueprint*, Templeton Foundation Press, p. 203 (emphasis mine).

[2] Hoover, Jon (2004) Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn-Tamiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of this World. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15:3, p. 289–290; Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. Also see: Ibn-Taimiyyah, Ahmed. (1991) *Minhaaju Sunnah*, Vol. 1, p. 360-362.

[3] When Ibn-Taimiyyah finalized his argument he said, "This is what the Book, the Sunnah, and the traditions have indicated. And this is what the clear intelligibles, purified from obscurities, indicate" (*Ibid*. p. 327).

Hence, all created things are finite but Allah's act of creating is infinite, He is eternally creative, in the past, now, and the in the future[1]. This crucial Islamic conceptualization of divine activity has profound implications with regards to God's Attributes and His relation to the universe. It was only in the late 20th century up to our day age that Ibn-Taimiyyah's insightful conciliation has been widely received. In the words of Ilya Prigogine, the renowned physical chemist:

"God is no more an archivist unfolding an infinite sequence he had designed once and forever. He continues the labor of creation throughout time"[2].

Indeed, in the light of this conceptualization several controversial issues can be settled. Four important ones are:

1- The deistic view that Allah has created the universe, wound it up like a clock, and then set it in motion without thereafter intervening[3].

2- The assumption that Allah and evolution are incompatible or mutually exclusive.

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(1) *Ibid*.

(2) Quoted in: Davies, Paul (2004) *The Cosmic Blueprint*, Templeton Foundation Press, p. 3.

(3) Allah is falsely described in classical theology (e.g. Augustine) as being 'immutable', meaning that He cannot change in any way. The theologians who propounded this concept built their conclusion on the false premise that change and eternity were inherently incompatible. However, if we mean by immutability *incorruptibility* (Hoffman, J. & Rosenkrantz, G.: 2002), that Allah does not deteriorate or corrupt, then there's no problem. But if we mean that He cannot and should not have anything to do with the world He has created, that He should not respond to or interact with life and the cosmos, then this is unsustainable in the light of evidence from the scriptures, science, and reason. By the same token, describing Allah as being 'atemporal- in the sense that He is absolutely unrelated or irrelevant to time - raises more problems than it solves. It is one thing to say that Allah is free of time circumscriptions, which is correct, and another thing to say that all of His actions are completely unrelated to time, which is wrong (see Hoffman, J. and Rosenkrantz, G. (2002) *The Divine Attributes*, Blackwell Publishers, p. 18-19, 107)

3- The idea of creation *ex nihilo* or the Christian theological view - chiefly promoted by Thomas Aquinas - that everything was literally created from nothing[1].

4- The question of whether Allah reveals Himself at a particular level of creation. For example, Stephen Jay Gould wonders whether "God reveals himself in nature primarily by the harmony of taxonomic structure or by the intricacies of particular adaptations"[2]. According to the Quran, Allah continuously reveals Himself through countless signs, at all levels, at all times (Quran: 10:101) and His creative involvement in the affairs of the universe occurs incessantly (Quran: 55:29). When this is considered in the light of infinite creativity, an impressive answer can be formulated: Allah reveals Himself at any level of existence accessible to human comprehension (Quran: 22:5; 34:3; 35:11; 6:59).

In line with the Quran's reference to Allah's ceaseless creativity, the prominent 19th century geologist, Roderick I. Murchison, discovered that "during cycles long anterior to the creation of the human race…whole races of animals - each group adapted to the physical conditions in which they lived - were **successively created and exterminated**"[3]. This cycle of creating and exterminating finds expression in a verse wherein Allah is described as the One 'who begins creation and then repeats', hence "*do they not see how Allah begins the creation and then repeats it; surely that is easy for Allah*" (Quran: 29:19). In fact, the subsequent verse urges man to journey across the land – as Murchison and Darwin did - and contemplate the beginnings of creation in order to infer an important lesson: that the possibility of recreating life is no less probable then how it was first made to emerge, thus:

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(1) Saunders, N. (2002) *Divine Action and Modern Science*, Cambridge University Press, p. 90, 92.
(2) Gould, S. J. (2002) *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, p. 252.
(3) Murchison, R. I. (1854) *Siluria: The History of the Oldest Known Rocks Containing Organic Remains,* London, p. 5.

> "...journey across the land and see how He (Allah) has begun the creation, then Allah will bring about the other creation, surely Allah is Able to do all things"[1].

With reference to the nature of Allah's creative activity, we have no *exact* – and most likely will never have - idea as to its depth of involvement. We know from the Quran that Allah's actions and our world are ceaselessly interconnected but we are still ignorant of the loci at which Allah's actions and cosmic events dynamically intersect. Ibnul-Qayim, however, attempts a plausible explanation in his masterpiece *Shifa'ul'aleel*; an explanation wherein Allah's actions are neither blindly foisted on the course of nature, including human actions, nor deprived of their relevance to the world they ultimately relate to. Ibnul-Qayim thus writes:

"Every single human will does not need a separate divine will for it to occur. Allah's general will that humans should be capable of willing is sufficient in this context. This is because (human) will is practically the movement of the self, and it is Allah who had willed that the self should be capable of moving. Hence it is untenable to assume that every single movement requires a special divine will. Similarly, Allah has willed that man should be capable of breathing, without claiming that every single instance of breathing requires a separate divine will (for it to happen). Also, Allah has willed that water as a whole should have the property of running, without assuming that every drop needs a special divine will for it to run. The same applies to orbital movements, wind, rain, the whims of the heart, the whispers of the chest, and Allah's will that man should be capable of speaking, without assuming that every pronounced letter requires a special divine will for it to be pronounced"[2].

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[1] Quran: 29:20.
[2] Ibnul-Qayim (1999) *Shifa'ul 'aleel*, Vol. 2, p. 507-508.

This precious exposition, from a brilliant Sunni scholar, sheds light on the nature of design from an Islamic perspective. It might be interesting to know that Darwin, arriving five centuries after Ibnul-Qayim, held a very similar view. Darwin found it extremely difficult to believe that every incident in nature, every particular variation, required special, separate, and immediate interventions from the Creator[(1)]. Nonetheless Darwin, in justifying his position, mistakenly conflates two distinct notions: Divine Will and Divine Omniscience, a blunder that mutes him into bewilderment[(2)].

It is this confusion between Will and Omniscience that led Darwin to doubt the beneficence of the Creator. Hence he fails to move beyond the conclusion that everything that happened in the world, including evil, is admired or desired by Allah. And this brings us to another difference which is between Will and Love. What happens as a consequence of Allah's general Will – not specifically intended –, such as the Ichneumonid feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars or the cat's playing with mice[(3)], is not necessarily indicative of any *intrinsic* good or evil owing to the fact that animal behavior, belonging to a different order, should not be judged against the standards of human morality. From this perspective, Darwin could have taken, as Erwin Schrödinger did, a neutral approach towards the workings of nature. "No natural happening is in itself either good or bad, nor is it in itself either beautiful or ugly", says Schrodinger[(4)]. For Darwin, on

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(1) See p. 9 & 165: *Charles Darwin's Letters: A Selection 1825-1859*; edited by Frederick Burkhardt, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
(2) *Ibid*: p. 156.
(3) *Ibid*: p. 11.
(4) Schrödinger, E. (1992) *What is Life* ? Cambridge University Press, p. 76. **An Islamic Sunni maxim** concerning the relationship between Allah's actions and the human world is: 'since we cannot know everything about Allah, we cannot know everything about the ends and purposes of his actions'. It is no exaggeration that failure to understand this point has, in many instances, led to a germination of the doubts which ultimately led to atheism. **Another maxim** is: 'Allah's attributes

the other hand, the world is a habitat of much misery. Indeed, we can see here two examples of how personal convictions may profoundly determine modes of thought and theorizing.

In conclusion to this part, we must note that Darwin himself conceded that human morality was of a very special kind. This means that it also operated within a domain of a very special kind and this is the domain of human behaviour. To universalize our standards of morality so that they account for every observable incident in the natural world is, as the wise reader would guess, both needlessly wrong and excessively anthropocentric[1]. Without the aid of authentic revelation, our interpretation of good and evil in relation to natural phenomena will remain largely impressionistic.

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are not always derivable from his (observable) actions in nature'. To clarify this latter one, I will propound an example. Does the doctor's act of saving lives thorough 'painful' surgeries prompt us to view his action as intrinsically evil?

[1] Although an ardent opponent of anthropocentric explanations, Darwin here, by judging all natural events against his own moral percepts, serves an ideal example of anthropocentric theorizing.

Islam and Science

> "He has created the heavens and the earth with truth. He coils the night upon the day and the day upon the night. And He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running (on a fixed course) for an appointed term. Verily, He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving".
>
> (Quran: 39:5)

Islam is not only compatible with science, not only encourages science and scientific thinking, but has also contributed significantly to the very existence of the modern world[1]. Some may consider this an exaggeration or accuse the writer of some inferiority complex but this is a demonstrable truth. Regrettably, there is the habit of concealing or evading - whether out of ill will, prejudice, or ignorance - any reference to Islam's monumental achievements in both science and philosophy. But, as one Arab adage goes, such attempts are like struggling to hide the beams of sunlight on a cloudless day. In this connection, I would like to refer to the study of Susan L. Douglass and Ross E. Dunn which dealt with the interpretation of Islam in American schools. Their survey has revealed that many of Islam's significant contributions to modern civilization have either been systematically downplayed or completely ignored by the writers of American curricula. Douglass and Dunn wrote:

"Most of the books give students the impression that scientific and philosophical documents were merely refrigerated in Muslim libraries until rationalist European thinkers thawed them out…None of the books, however, has caught up with the current academic view that Muslim scholars, drawing on Indian, Persian and Greek sources and

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[1] Hamilton, M.l M. (2007) *The Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers, and Artists*, National Geographic, p. 79.

questing for knowledge in fulfilment of one of the prime values of their own faith, achieved a sweeping new synthesis of the mathematical sciences between the eighth and the fourteenth century. Almost all the textbooks state or at least imply that the Muslim "golden age" exhausted itself by about the eleventh century; few texts acknowledge any contributions thereafter except tiles and tulips"[(1)].

Citing the example of a Muslim mathematician would suffice to appreciate the magnitude of Islam's influence. The Muslim mathematician, astronomer and geographer, Muhammad Ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi (circa 790 - 840), whose name is the origin of the term 'algorithm', introduced a body of mathematics which both changed the tapestry of science and the course of human civilization. He created a mathematical system that provided "the key to begin unlocking all planes of the universe. His numbers and new ways of calculating enabled the building of what are now 100-story towers and mile-long bridges; calculating the point at which a space probe will intersect with the orbits of one of Jupiter's moons; the reactions of nuclear physics; the cellular processes of biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and marketing research; the calculus of a global economy; the language and intelligence of software; and the confidentiality of a mobile phone conversation"[(2)].

Al-Khwarizmi had in mind the germ of what one may call today 'astounding technological achievements'. In his book *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*, his goal was to convey to the reader "what is easiest and most useful in arithmetic, such as men constantly

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(1) L. Douglass, Ross E. D. (2003) Interpreting Islam in American Schools**,** *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588, Islam: Enduring Myths and Changing Realities, p. 67-68.

(2) Hamilton, Michael M. (2007) *The Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers, and Artists*, National Geographic p. 92.

require in cases of inheritance, legacies, partition, lawsuits, and trade, and in all their dealings with one another, or where the measuring of lands, the digging of canals, geometrical computations, and other objects of various sorts and kinds concerned"[1].

Many may be surprised to learn that if one fails to employ a reasonable degree of scientific thinking there is a good chance the Quran will either be misunderstood or will not be understood. Gullible, starry-eyed, uncritical, superstitious, and biased classify among the characteristics typical of an unscientific attitude. The Quran, in turn, is a book that demands evidence (*Burhan*), observation (*Mushahadah*), contemplation (*Tadabbur*), and reflection (*Tafakkur*) on the one hand, and denunciates blind imitation, sheer speculation, unsupported claims, and intellectual pride on the other.

More importantly, the Quran expands the scope of possible knowledge so as to account for matters of faith which, in turn, gain credibility from the unmistakable correspondence between reality and revelation. According to the Quran, there is no warrant for denying the existence of *Al-Ghaib* (the unseen world) because the problem ultimately lies with human ignorance.

> "Nay, but they denied the knowledge they could not compass, and of which the interpretation has not yet come unto them"[2].

Let us now see what Islam has to say about the story of creation. We will start with what Islam has to say about the origin of the universe and some of its fundamental properties. Then, we will see what Islam has to say about the origin of human beings, namely its reference to key stages in human embryological development.

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[1] *Ibid*: p. 91.
[2] Quran: 10:39.

The Origin of the Universe

The universe was a single entity. It then expanded exponentially [1] - and is still expanding – until it reached its present form. After that, water emerged and from it evolved all forms of life. These facts are clearly stated in the Quran:

> "Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and earth were joined together (as a single thing) after which We clove them asunder? And out of water have we made every living thing. Will they not then believe?"[2].

> "With power and might have We constructed heaven and, verily, We will expand it"[3].

Today, many scientists use the term 'singularity' when referring to the initial state of the universe. Some are content with the term 'Big Bang', first coined by Fred Hoyle in 1949, to describe the event which caused this singularity to explode and expand. Interestingly, the Quran uses the word 'Fataqa' to describe earliest moments of expansion. In Arabic, the word Fataqa roughly means 'to separate or diffuse', but not in a violent way (i.e. explosion) as the term 'big bang' immediately implies. Thus, the verb 'Fataqa' describes the event more accurately and it was only very recently that scientists have changed their minds and warned against the misleading implications of Hoyle's phraseology. Accordingly, Bill Bryson notes:

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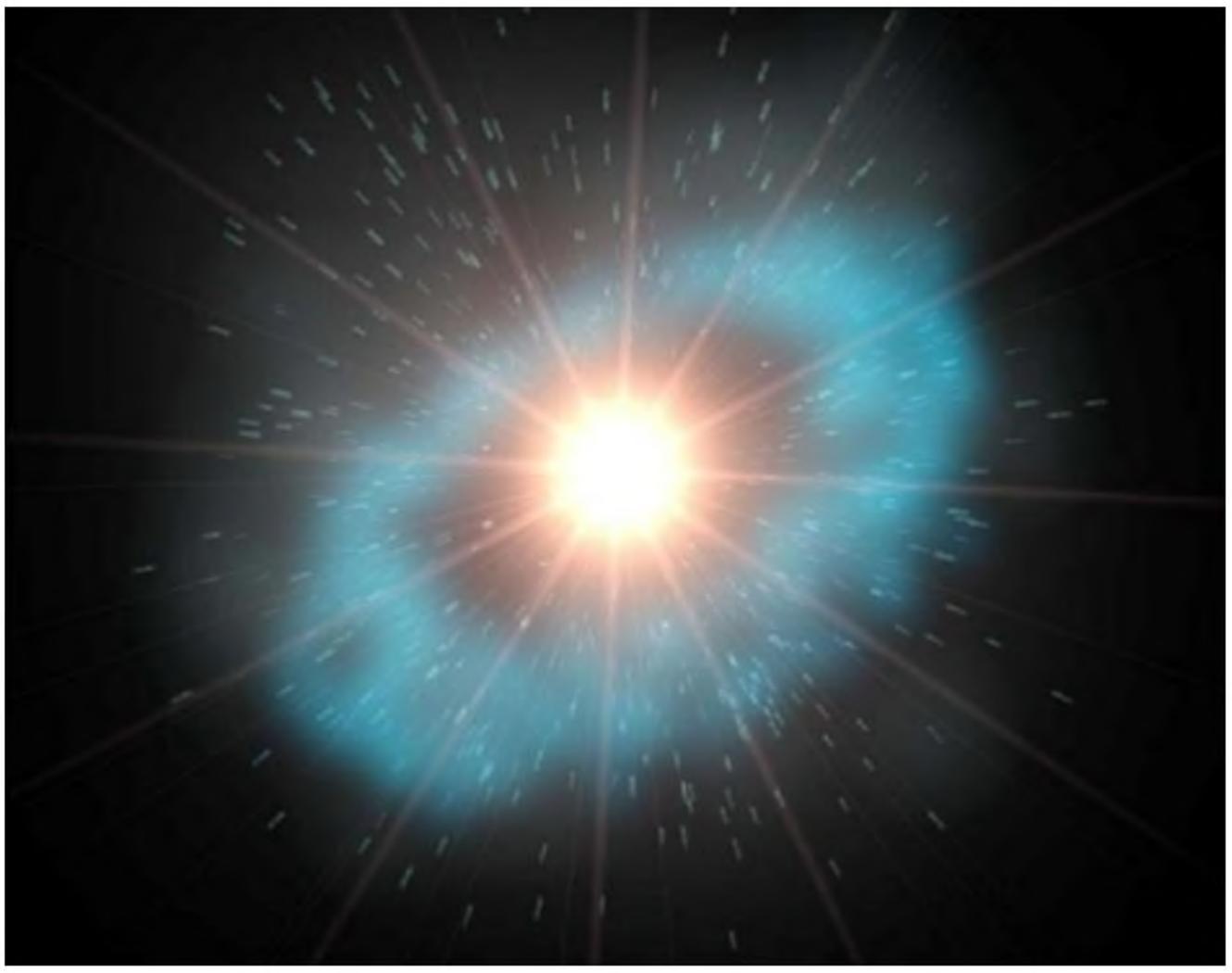
[1] This observation, first discovered by Edwin Hubble, showed that galaxies in the observable universe were rapidly moving away from one another, which meant the universe was expanding. The British physicist Stephen Hawking dubbed this discovery as "one of the great intellectual revolutions of the twentieth century" (See*: The Universe in a Nutshell*, Stephen Hawking, p. 76, Bantam Press, 2001).

[2] Quran: 21:30.

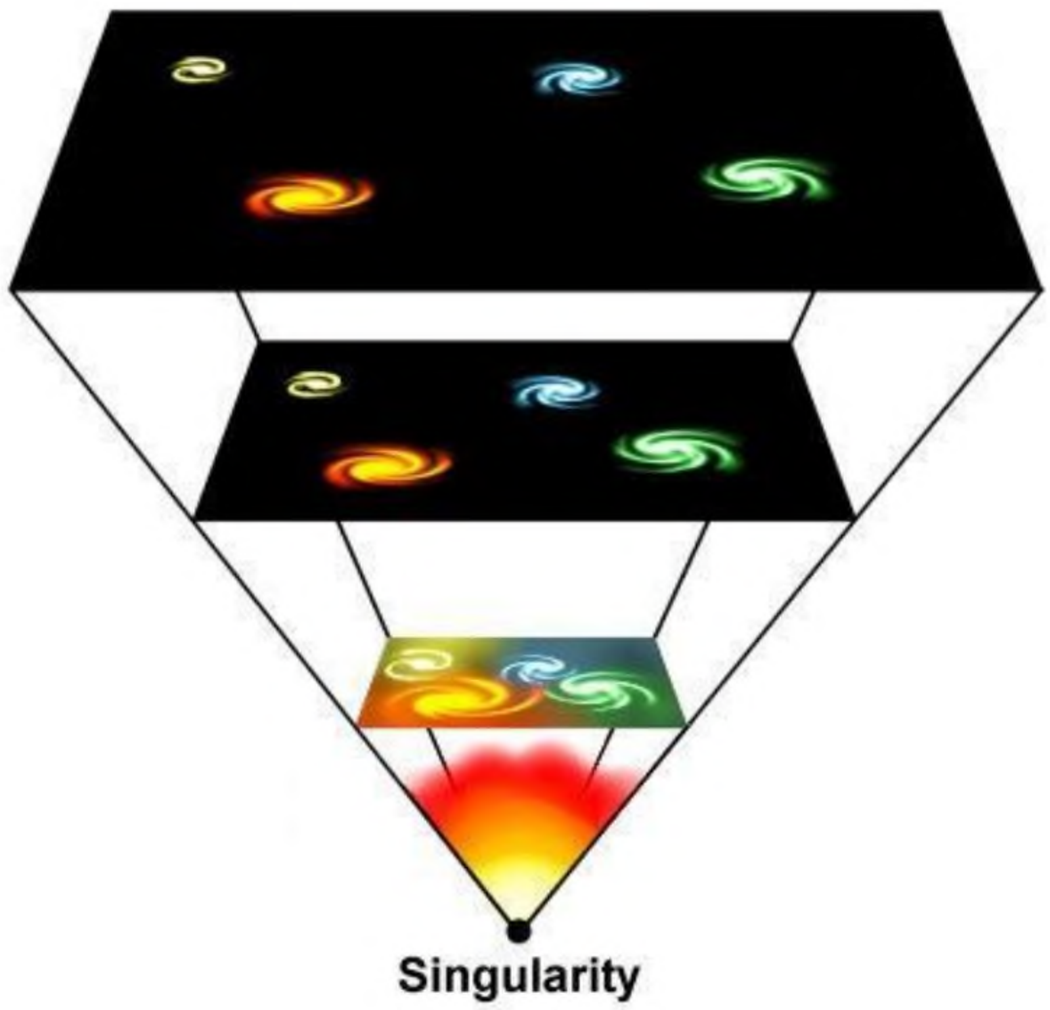
[3] Quran: 51:47.

"Although everyone calls it the Big Bang, many books caution us not to think of it as an explosion in the conventional sense. It was, rather, a vast, sudden expansion on a whopping scale"[(1)]



The universe originated from a singularity

[(1)] Bryson, B. (2004) *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, p. 31. Interestingly, the adverb 'asunder', which some translators of the Quran chose to avoid, has been used by the well-know cosmologist, Paul Davies (2001), to describe the initial expansion of the universe. Among a number of widely used translations of the Quran, Yusuf Ali's version is apparently the only one to use the word 'asunder' as the equivalent of 'Fataqa'. See Yusuf Ali's translation (Quran: 21-30) and for Davies see Davies, P. (2001) A Naturalistic Account of the Universe. In Peterson, Michael et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 231.



The Quran states that the universe is made to expand

It is literally stated in the Bible that 'six days' were needed for the universe to emerge into existence. Evolutionists quote this piece of information to amplify the hostility between science and religion. "Some argued", says Carl Zimmer "that the word day in Genesis was a poetic expression that didn't specifically mean 24 hours" and instead were interpreted to mean "six vast gulfs of time during which God brought the world and life into existence"[1]. Because the Bible cites no evidence for such poetic interpretations, many evolutionists reject them as futile attempts to rescue the Bible from flagrant inconsistencies. On the contrary, the Quran gives time different senses. According to one verse (Quran: 22:47), a day can stand for a thousand years. In another (Quran: 70:4), it can

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[1] Zimmer, Carl (2001) *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea from Darwin to DNA*, Arrow Books, p. 384.

stand for 50,000 years. So the Quran literally - and not poetically - gives time a versatile character and subjects it to multiple interpretations, including the interpretation that 'six days' may plausibly mean six successive aeons of time.

Cosmologists speak of a universe which is **homogenous** and **isotropic.** These two notions constitute what is formally called the Cosmological Principle**.** The universe is said to be homogenous and isotropic because it expands evenly, giving it a uniform density and structure all throughout. This is why, at large distances, the universe appears smooth, even, and the same no matter where you are in the universe[1]. To any observer, it looks free of rifts and irregularities. There are no blots on the landscape. One verse in the Quran points to a universe whose large scale fabric is free of fissures, defects, and whose dimensions are free of disproportion[2]:

> "He (Allah) Who created the seven heavens one above another; no where do you see any Tafawut (disproportion, irregularity) in the Creation of The Most Merciful. So turn the vision again (towards the heaven): do you then see any Futoor (flaw, crack, rift)? Again turn the vision a second time and (as a result of no disproportion or flaw) the vision will bounce back discomfited and worn out".[3]

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[1] Seaborn, James B. (1998) *Understanding the Universe*, Springer, p. 277.

[2] It is interesting to know that the rate of the expansion of the universe is also the same in all directions, "the same from region to region within the cosmos", says Paul Davies (Davies, P. (2001) A Naturalistic Account of the Universe. In Peterson, Michael et al. (editors) *Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 231).

[3] Quran: 67:3-4. If we are to consult two authoritative Arabic dictionaries: *Lisaanul Arab* and *Al-Qamoosul Muheet*, the two words 'Tafawut' and 'Futoor' respectively mean:

a. Discrepancy, inconsistency, and disproportionateness.
b. Defect, flaw, and irregularity.

A question worth posing in this connection is: how does Islam solve the apparent conflict between two models of the universe: the steady-state universe and the expanding universe?

In the expanding universe, the galaxies "move away from each other, spreading the matter more thinly over space"[1], explains James B. Seaborn. "On the other hand, the perfect cosmological principle requires that the density of matter in the universe remain constant over time"[2], hence a steady-state universe. "To make the steady-state cosmology compatible with the expanding universe", says Seaborn "its proponents introduced the notion of *continuous creation*. As the universe expands and the galaxies move farther apart, new matter - in the form of hydrogen - is introduced into the universe"[3].

The reconciliation suggested above bears the hallmark of Islamic cosmology. To begin with, Islam acknowledges two facts: the fact that the universe is expanding and the fact that matter is continuously created. The verse where 'expansion' is literally mentioned reads:

> "With power and might have We constructed heaven and, verily, We will expand it"[4].

The verse from which the notion of 'continuous creation' can readily be inferred is:

> "Your Lord is Al-Khallaaq, the All-Knowing"[5].

The word *Al-Khallaaq* is one of Allah's Names. It means the One who continuously creates[1]. The mid-syllable in the

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(1) Seaborn, James B. (1998) *Understanding the Universe: An Introduction to Physics and Astrophysics*, Springer, p. 278.
(2) *Ibid*.
(3) *Ibid*.
(4) Quran: 51:47.
(5) Quran: 15:86.

word 'Al-Khallaaq' is stressed to emphasize the action of continuity. The Quran tells us that it is Allah who causes the universe to expand and that it is He who causes matter to be continuously introduced (to maintain the constancy of matter density). The matter filling every nook and cranny of the universe is composed of particles. In particle physics, scientists say that there are antiparticles for almost all kinds of particles. Physicist Steven Weinberg writes:

"After the discovery of the positron, it eventually became clear that to each kind of particle there corresponds an antiparticle, with the same mass as the particle but with opposite values for the electric charge and similar conserved quantities"[2].

Brian Greene also explains:

"For instance, the antiparticle of an electron is called a *positron* – it has the same mass as an electron, but its electric charge is +1 whereas the eclectic charge of the electron is -1"[3].

The particle-antiparticle duality, imparting a symmetrical feature to the building blocks of matter, does not go without mention in the Quran (36:36):

> "And of everything We have created Zoujain (two things existing as a pair), that you may remember (the Grace and Oneness of Allah)" (Quran: 51:49).

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[1] Al-Qahtani, Saeed W. (2003) *Sharh Asmaaillahil Husna Fi-dhoui'l Kitabi wa Sunnah* (Explaining Allah's Names in the Light of the Quran and Sunnah), Saudi Arabia, p. 168.

[2] Weinberg, Steven (2003) *The Discovery of Subatomic Particles*, Cambridge, p. 148-149. Concerning the particle-antiparticle pair, there is also the intriguing notion of 'parity' elucidated by the British Mathematician Roger Penrose. As Penrose explains, "The quantity called *parity* is an (approximate) multiplicative quantum number with n=2" (Penrose, Roger (2004) *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe*, Jonathon Cape, London, p. 100).

[3] Greene, Brian (2000) *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage Books, p. 8-9.

"Glory is to Him, Who has created all the Azwaaj (pairs, counterparts) of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own selves (male and female), and of that which they know nothing of".

It is worth mentioning that 'Zouj' from which *Azwaaj* and *Zoujain* are derived, is an Arabic word that covers two essential meanings as far as symmetry between 'quarks' (smaller than atoms) is concerned. According to *Lisaan Al-Arab*, the voluminous Arabic dictionary compiled by the famous Arab lexicologist Ibn-Manthoor (1232-1311), the word 'Zouj' can refer to both the pairing of two identical things and the pairing of two opposite (unlike) things where, in both cases, each is the counterpart of the other[(1)]. This startling fact, revealed to Mohammad centuries before anything was known about particle physics, can further be appreciated by reading what modern science has to say about symmetry among quarks. Brian Greene elucidates:

"All the data that have been collected establish that there is a symmetry among the quarks in the sense that the interactions between two like-coloured quarks (red with red, green with green, or blue with blue) are all identical, and similarly, the interactions between any two unlike-coloured quarks (red with green, green with blue, or blue with red) are also identical"[(2)].

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(1) *Lisaanul-a'rab*, Vol. 21, p. 1884. The same is mentioned by Arraghib Al-Asfahani in his dictionary of the Quran *Al-Mufradat Fi Ghareeb Al-Quran*.

(2) Greene, Brian (2000) *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage Books, p. 125.

Humans: Not a Trivial Detail

The true moral capacity of the human mind can only reveal itself in a world where choices have to be weighed and made, where intellectual exercise takes effect to solve problems, recognize clues, explore evidence, and eventually arrive at meaning. All of this would have been impossible had we existed in a world which is *terribly* ideal and perfect; a world in which everything is *so designed*, *so intelligible*, *so uniform,* and *so relevant* that nothing escapes comprehension or in the least defies human explanation. Is it this extreme version of design evolutionary atheists would wish to observe in order to acknowledge the existence of a Designer? For many evolutionary atheists the answer would be in the affirmative. Some of these people have developed a tendency to cavil about anything suggestive of design and they do so with unremitting devotion[(1)].

[(1)] Atheist Carl Sagan offers an example. Although he frankly admits that "there is certainly a lot of order in the universe", his argument from chaos is that "the centers of galaxies routinely explode, and if there are inhabited worlds and civilizations there, they are destroyed by millions, with each explosion of the galactic nucleus or quasar"."That" says Sagan, "does not sound more like a god who knows what he, she, or it is doing" (See Sagan, Carl (2007) The God Hypothesis. In *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*, selected with introductions by Christopher Hitchens, Da Capo Press, p. 233). Sagan's argument, which is ontologically groundless, is based on several chimerical assumptions. He hypothesizes something that does not actually exist, adopts it as a premise, and then bases his conclusion about God on it. In reality, we, including Sagan himself, know of no 'inhabited worlds and civilizations' at the center of exploding galaxies nor do we know of any other destructive locality wherein emerging 'inhabited worlds and civilizations' are perpetually caused to suffer or perish. It is my advice that Sagan and his proponents should snap out of daydreaming and consult reality. As the famous tenth century Arab poet, Al-Mutanabbi, pithily expressed it, "believe in what you see and shun what you only hear of for there's enough light coming from the Sun than that coming from Saturn!"

The problem with a typical evolutionary atheist is not that the universe is really lacking in sufficient evidence for design. Rather, his problem is that he himself is lacking in what draws his attention to meaningful evidence from/for design. To the believer, there is abundant evidence for creation, for maximal moral worth, and the rest are irrelevant minutiae. The fact that another star is imploding out there in space to become a black hole might be a teleologically incomprehensible detail but, at the same time, this speaks nothing for atheism.

The atheist, on the other hand, would pick up on such seemingly irrelevant and arbitrary instances, dramatize their chaotic aspect, and then turn them into a boisterous campaign against design or theism. The only difference, albeit deeply decisive, is that while believers are sensitive to what's immediately meaningful, glaringly relevant and intelligible atheists, on the contrary, are hypersensitive to what they view as irrelevant, remotely relevant, or *apparently* meaningless with respect to the immediate human condition. The fact that atheists are almost blind to signs of design is not our fault; neither is it design's nor the Designer's fault.

Throughout my readings, I have noticed a trend to estimate the worth of human life against our size and location in the vastness of cosmos. Some believe that there is a necessary correlation between the triviality of human life and the *brute* fact of having to exist in a monstrous universe.

To such people, any anthropocentric interpretation of life and the cosmos is downright wishful thinking. But let us not be carried away here. Size has nothing to say about the value of truth and the meaning of morality. The fact that an elephant is a thousand times larger than an insect does not mean that elephants are 'more important' than ants, for example. Justice and honesty are good because they are good and not because they are a trillion times heavier or larger than whatever object one would like to entertain for comparison.

The instructive words of physicist Louis Trenchard More are extremely pertinent here:

"We are asked by astronomers to look upon the earth as a mere insignificant speck, and to be ashamed to consider ourselves important because, forsooth, Betelgeuse is hugely larger and rushes through space with a vast motion. But, if Betelgeuse were a million times larger than it is, of what importance is that fact? So long as this little earth alone contains man with his power of thought, and Betelgeuse does not, then the mystery and value of the earth is incomparably greater; it still remains the dominant factor in the universe, while Betelgeuse is of no more importance than any other bit of matter"[1].

"We must not underrate the importance of his (man) bodily structure", says Darwin[2]. According to the Quran, human beings are created in the best possible *Taqweem*, meaning form or structure:

"Verily we have created man in the best Taqweem"[3].

But does the verse, as it may appear, imply a limit to divine omnificence (i.e. creative power)? Are we to understand that Allah is now incapable of creating us in a structure better than the one we presently enjoy? From the Islamic viewpoint, the answer in the negative is a foregone conclusion and there is an explanation why. In the light of other verses, the superlative adjective '*best*' is relative (not meant in the absolute sense), dependent on other contexts, and therefore should not purport an upper limit to Allah's omnificence[1].

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[1] More, Louis T. (1925) *The Dogma of Evolution*, Princeton University Press, p. 243.

[2] Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 68.

[3] Quran: 95: 4.

[1] Four centuries before Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716 AD), Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), the great Islamic mystic and philosopher,

We can understand this in the light of the Cosmological Argument discussed earlier, which states that the universe is fine-tuned in a way which is suitable for human life to thrive. This also necessitates the 'fitness' of the other side of the equation which is the fitness of the human species for living in such a universe. In the verse above, the word *taqweem* is derived from the root 'qouam' which primarily connotes two senses: to correct and to erect or set upright. Thus, the noun phrase '*best taqweem*' is of vital relevance given the fact that it signifies how the properties of the human body are predetermined in proportion to the properties of the world it happens to exist in. As the twentieth century biochemist Lawrence Henderson had observed:

"The fitness of the environment is one part of a reciprocal relationship of which the fitness of the organism is the other. This relationship is completely and perfectly reciprocal, the one fitness is not less important than the other, nor less

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asserted that our universe was the best possible one Allah could have made and that if it hadn't been so it would have implied a sense of imperfection about the Creator. On the face of it, there is much truth in this statement. When we think of the universe as the only possible world wherein life *as we conceive it* may thrive, we can immediately appreciate the elegance of this conclusion. Ahmed Ibn-Taimiyyah (1263–1328 AD), however, comments on Al-Ghazali's assertion and adds the fact that a possible world remains a possible world and not a necessary one for once we claim that this world is the best and associate it with Allah's perfection, we are forced to conclude that it is a necessary one (rather than a possible one). Ibn-Taimiyyah correctly warns that bold assertions about Allah's Attributes should not be based on conjectures about the nature of the physical world. He also maintains that the present world is perfect for the purposes and ends of Allah's plans but not perfect in the sense that Allah is incapable of creating other worlds with equal or superior perfection for the simple reason that perfection is a quality which is partially relative to the judgments of observers who inhabit such worlds. (See Ibn-Taimiyyah, A. (2001) *Jami' Arrsaa'il* (The Collection of Treatises). Edited by Dr. Mohammad R. Salim, Saudi Arabia, p. 142).

invariably a constituent of a particular case of biological fitness"[1].

To discern the vitality of this point, we turn to two illuminating notions iterated by physicist John D. Barrow in two of his books: *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*[2] and the *Artful Universe*. According to Barrow, because we are physically "composed of huge numbers of atoms and molecules, held together by a lattice-work of interatomic bonds", we face the threat of being exposed to an imbalanced force of gravity. If we, with our present structure, were "put on a planet that is too big", argues Barrow, we "will be crushed by the overwhelming strength of gravity at its surface"[3]. This means that the structure of the human body (taqweem), as implied by the Quran, is 'best' (Quran: 95: 4) suited for existing on a planet with the right size and gravity and this planet is Earth. One of the first major works on the vital relation between form, shape, and gravity is that of D'Arcy W. Thompson in his *On Growth and Form*, wherein he attampted to explain how the "physical forces exert a direct and immediate influence in shaping organisms as they grow"[4].

The other notion mentioned by Barrow has to do with our size in relation to the sizes of other objects in the universe. On a logarithmic scale of the sizes of the most significant structures in the universe, human beings appear to "sit *midway* between the vastness of intergalactic space and the subatomic microcosm of elementary particles within the atoms of our bodies"[1], states Barrow. This means that, within the larger

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[1] Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p. 271.
[2] Co-authored with Frank J. Tipler.
[3] Barrow, John D. (2005) *The Artful Universe*, Cambridge University Press, p. 63.
[4] Gould, S. (1971) D'Arcy Thompson and the Science of Form. *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Form and Its Alternatives, (Winter), p. 229-258.
[1] *Ibid*. p. 56-57.

venue of existence, human beings occupy a 'unique observational position', in relation to the sizes of other things in the cosmic inventory (i.e. list of objects in the universe). By 'Unique Observational Position' or **UOP** (if I may introduce such neologism) I mean that human beings enjoy the privilege of appreciating reality from a standpoint which is equally distant from two extremes: the macrocosmic and the microcosmic[1]. Underscoring this vital fact, Martin Rees also notes that:

"We are poised midway between the masses of atoms and stars…We straddle the cosmos and the micro world - intermediate in size between the Sun, at a billion meters in diameter, and a molecule at a billionth of a meter. It is actually no coincidence that nature attains its maximum complexity on this intermediate scale: anything larger, if it were on a habitable planet, would be vulnerable to breakage or crushing by gravity"[2].

This unique perspective maximizes the richness of human experience and exposes the eye to a multidirectional flow of divine *Ayat* (signs). Without this 'unique observational position', which nearly puts us at the center of things, humans would have had to observe the universe from a narrow unidirectional perspective. The unique cosmic podium we stand on is not accidental. Rather, it has been made for us to observe as many signs of creation as possible, as mentioned in the Quran:

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[1] In his *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins, regardless of his atheistic views, also states that we survive in a "Middle World where the objects that mattered to our survival were neither very large nor very small". Towards the bottom of the page, Dawkins perceptively remarks that "our bodies have evolved to help our bodies find their way around the world on the scale at which those bodies operate" (*The God Delusion*, OUP, 2007, p. 412).

[2] Rees, Martin (2000) *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*, p. 6-7.

> "We will show them our signs in the furthest regions, and in their own selves, so that it becomes manifest to them that it (the Quran) is the truth. Is it not enough that their Lord is a witness over everything?"[1]

I hope we have obtained a clearer understanding of what is meant by the noun phrase "*the best* (possible) *structure*". The Anthropic Cosmological Argument may further polish our understanding for if our physical properties were any different, the universe would not have been inhabited by unique observers like us. Also, if the properties of the universe were significantly any different, it would have become inhospitable for both human life and meaningful human activity. The vital compatibility between human life and the properties of the cosmos is acknowledged by the Quran. Both are combined in the following verse:

> "It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them, in a period equal to six days, then rose above the throne. You have no protector other than Him, nor any intercessor. Will you not be warned even then? He administers all affairs from high to low, then they evolve back to him step by step in a (heavenly) day whose measure is a thousand years in your reckoning. Such is He, the Knower of the unknown and the known, the mighty and the merciful, who made all things He created in the best proportion; and first fashioned man from clay, then made his offspring from the extract of a weak (Maheen) fluid, then proportioned and breathed into him from His spirit, and gave you the senses of hearing, sight, and cognition; yet how little grateful you are (towards Allah)"[2].

All fundamental physical properties in our universe collaborate to permit the existence and continuity of life on our

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[1] Quran 41: 53.

[2] Quran 32:4–9.) **Note**: translation of this verse borrowed from F. E. Peters (1994) *A Reader on Classical Islam*, with minor changes(.

planet. It is also evident that the universe has been crafted in such a way as to allow beings like us to emerge and observe both the orderliness of the cosmos and our unique position among the other species. Concluding his monumental study on the *Fitness of the Environment*, Henderson wrote:

"The properties of matter and the course of cosmic evolution are now seen to be intimately related to the structure of the living being and to its activities; they become, therefore, far more important in biology than has been previously suspected. For the whole evolutionary process, both cosmic and organic, is one, and the biologist may now rightly regard the universe in its very essence as biocentric"[1].

Existing in an utilizable universe is one of Allah's greatest favors. Allah's favors are either *Dhahirah* (meaning outward, seen) or *Battinah* **(**meaning inward, unseen**)**. This is an inclusive categorization of all that is vitally conducive to the well being of the human species. Nothing is left out.

> "Do you not see that Allah has subjected to your use all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen; yet there are among mankind who dispute about Allah without knowledge, guidance or an enlightening Book"[2].

Elsewhere in the Quran, we are told that human beings are not the only possible form of intelligent life. Two verses state that Allah is fully capable of replacing human beings with a new form of creation:

> "If He wills, He can remove you and bring about a new creation. And this is not hard for Allah"[1].

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[1] Henderson, Lawrence J. (1913) *The Fitness of the Environment*. Macmillan, New York, p. 312.
[2] Quran: 31:20.
[1] Quran: 35:16.

"Do you not see that Allah has created the heavens and the earth in truth? If He wills, He can remove you and bring (in your place) a new creation"[1].

"If He wills, He can remove you O mankind and bring about a different creation, and Allah has all power to do so"[2].

Limitless are the possibilities arising from Allah's creative power. In another verse, we are told that Allah is fully capable of transforming us into a form of creation beyond imagination:

"We have decreed death unto you all, and We are never outstripped in replacing your like and transforming you into a form of creation which you know not"[3].

The Quran on Human Origin

Several versus in the Quran (3:27, 6: 95 &10:3) unambiguously state that life and nonlife or living and nonliving states can be generated from each other. It was only in 1828 that this was shown to be possible. The German chemist Friedrich Wöhler conducted an experiment that synthesized "urea from ammonium chloride and silver cyanide"[4], which meant that what was once thought to be a biological product can also issue from the (nonliving) matter of chemistry. According to biochemist Michael Behe, Wöhler

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[1] Quran: 14:19.
[2] Quran: 4:133.
[3] Quran: 56:60-61.
[4] Ridley, Matt (1999) *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters*, HarperCollins, p. 15.

was the first to shatter "the distinction between life and nonlife that was thought to exist up until that time"[1].

In the Quran's lexis (3:27, 6: 95 &10:3), the words *Mayyit* (dead, nonliving or devoid of life according Arabic language) and *Hayy* (living or lively) are used to express the two contrasting states while the present tense verb *Yukhrij* (meaning: to bring something out of something else) is used to express the event or activity whereby the living is brought forth from the nonliving and vice versa. But, as also stated in the Quran, the One who ultimately sustains and oversees the functioning of this law throughout history is Allah for He describes Himself as the One "*who brings forth the living from the dead and the One who causes the dead to come forth from the living*" (Quran: 30:19). The equivalent of 'dead' in Arabic has a much broader sense as it equally refers to any nonliving substance, state, or entity. This may explain why – and this may spark unusual interest – the Quran speaks of humans as being dead prior to their existence in this world (Quran: 2: 28), in a reference to the 'dead' matter that had preceded their existence and which would later become the substance of their living bodies through creation.

We may now proceed to see what the Quran has to say about human embryology.

A fact which continues to astound not only the common layman but also world authorities in the field of medicine is the Quran's accurate description of key stages in human embryological development. Worldwide authorities in the field expressed utter surprise to find the Quran in perfect harmony with key microscopic discoveries in modern embryology[2]. Keith Moore, an international leading scientist in anatomy and

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[1] Behe, M. (2000) Evidence for Design at the Foundation of Life. In *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe*, Behe, Michael et al., Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute, Vol. 9, p. 113.

[2] Naik, Zakir (2007) *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible*? Darussalam, p. 60.

embryology and author of one of the most important references in the field[1], was asked whether he believed that the Quran was the word of God and his instant reply was "I find no difficulty in accepting this"[2]. Keith Moore decided to co-author a book on this discovery with Mr. Azindani, an Islamic scholar and pharmacist, and a team of other experts. The book was published in 1992 with the title *Human Development as Described in the Quran and Sunnah*, published by the Commission on Scientific Signs of the Quran and Sunnah.

One of the most accurate studies on the compatibility of the Quran with modern science came with the title *The Bible, The Quran and Science,* by Maurice Bucaille, a French scientist, surgeon, and winner of the French Academy Award. The original unabridged copy of the book is very informative on the subject and I wished to base my writing on it, but the problem is that it contains a technical parlance which, in my estimation, may distract the readers from the main topic in question. Luckily, I was able to find a well-edited version of the book. The editing was done by Dr. Bilial Philips, Director of the Islamic Information Center in Dubai. Therefore, I intend to cite the section on embryology without changes except for minor amendments to the translation of the verses, an anecdote I had to exclude, and the omission of information with very little relevance to the subject at hand. *Where necessary, I will insert my own comments and they will appear in square brackets*. Please note that in the Quran Allah may refer to Himself using the pronoun 'We' instead of 'I'. In Arabic

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[1] Moore, Keith L. & T.V.N. Persuad (1993) *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology*, Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders Company.
[2] In a videotaped conference that was held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The video tape is obtainable at <www.islam-guide.com>.

stylistics, this is intended to magnify and extol the Creator and should therefore not imply plurality[1].

The Quran on Embryology[2]

] In one verse (Quran: 71: 17), we are unequivocally informed that human beings were caused to grow from earth matter. The transitive verb *Anbata* from *Yunbit*, meaning to grow, obviously implies an evolving event. The word also implies that the rudimentary material from which humans have grown is analogous to that of the primordial matter proposed by evolutionists[3] because no form of life can *grow* without water at its most basic level[4]. I think it's not difficult to see here where evolution and Islam are not entirely incompatible. Yusuf Ali's translation of the verse, with little modification, sufficiently captures the meaning:

> "And Allah has produced you from the earth, growing (gradually). Then He will return you into it (earth), and then bring you out (on the Day of Resurrection)?"[5] [

There are a multitude of statements in the Quran on the subject of human reproduction which constitute a challenge to the embryologist seeking a human explanation for them. It was

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[1] This mode of stylistics is also used in English. According to Longman's *Dictionary of Contemporary English* the plural pronoun 'we' can be "used by a king or queen to refer to himself or herself". (2003, p. 1867).

[2] Section borrowed from Bucaille, Maurice (2005) *The Quran and Modern Science*. Edited by Dr. B. Philips. U. A. E. p. 17-20.

[3] Miller, Stanley and Lazcano, Antonio (2002) Formation of the Building Blocks of Life. In *Origin: The Beginnings of Biological Evolution*, edited by Schopf, J. William, University of California Press, p. 109.

[4] Davies, Paul (1992) *The Mind of God: Science & the Search for Ultimate Meaning*, Penguin, p. 198.

[5] Quran: 71:17.

only after the birth of the basic sciences which contributed to our knowledge of biology and the invention of the microscope, that humans were able to understand the depth of those Quran statements. It was impossible for a human being living in the early seventh century to have accurately expressed such ideas. There is nothing to indicate that people in the Middle-East and Arabia knew anything more about this subject than those living in Europe or anywhere else. Today, there are many Muslims who possess a thorough knowledge of the Quran and the natural sciences and who have recognized the amazing similarity between the verses of the Quran dealing with reproduction and modern scientific knowledge.

It is especially in the field of embryology, that a comparison between the beliefs present at the time of Quranic revelation and those of modern scientific data leave us amazed at the degree of agreement between the statements from both. Not to mention the total absence of any reference in the Quran to the mistaken ideas that were prevalent in the world at that time.

Fertilization

Let us now isolate, from all these verses, precise ideas concerning the complexity of semen and the fact that only an infinitely small quantity is required to ensure fertilization. In chapter *Al-Insaan* (i.e. man/the human being*)* the Quran states:

> "Verily, We created humankind from a small quantity of mingled fluids"[1].

The Arabic word *nutfah* has been translated as "small quantity". It comes from the verb meaning ‗to dribble, to trickle' and is used to describe what remains in the bottom of a

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[1] Quran: 76:2.

bucket which has been emptied. The verse correctly implies that fertilization is performed by only a very small volume of liquid. On the other hand, mingled fluids (*amshaaj*) have been understood by early commentators to refer to the mixture of male and female discharges. Modern authors have corrected this view and note that the sperm is made up of various components[1].

] The verb –Natafa", derived from the root of –Nutfah", describes the event of spurted fluid, which, in our context, stands for the ejaculation of semen right into the uterus to merge with the ovum[2]. The word is so terse that the noun –Nutfah"[3] is also said to describe the mixture of male and female discharges to become one thing, for which the Quran uses the more specific word *Amshaj* (Quran: 76:2), meaning 'mingled quantities'. The appositive phrase[4] *Nutfatin Amshaj* (Quran: 76:2) refers to the mingling of male and female gametes together with part of the surrounding fluid[5]. It's worth noting that the word *Washeejah*, which comes from the same root of *Amshaj*, is used in formal Arabic to describe kinship bonds among a certain group [.

When the Quran talks of a fertilizing fluid composed of different components, it also informs us that human progeny will be formed from something extracted from this liquid. This is the meaning of the following verse in chapter *Assajdah:*

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(1) Even so, the early commentaries do not conflict with what the modern scientists have said because early commentators did not exclude the possibility of other components.

(2) *Al-Qamoos Al-Muheet*, p. 857, Al-Phairooz Abaadi, Al-Resalah Publishers, Beirut, Lebanon.

(3) Abu-Bakr, the Prophet's dearest companion, used to the word *Natafa* when telling a dream he had seen to describe honey dripping from a cloud.

(4) "When two words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence have the same reference, they are said to be in apposition" (*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, Jack C. Richards, Richard Schmidt et al., London, 2002, p. 29).

(5) Naik, Zakir (2007 *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible*?, Darussalam, p. 66.

"Then He made [man's] offspring from the essence of a *Maheen* (i.e. weak and ignored) fluid"[1].

The Arabic word translated by the term ‗essence' is *sulaalah* which means ‗something extracted or the best part of a thing'. In whatever way it is translated, it refers to part of a whole. Under normal conditions, only one single cell, spermatozoon, out of over 50 million ejaculated by a man during sexual intercourse will actually penetrate the ovule.

] The root of the word ―Sulalatin", which is "Sal", is a base for two words which connote two pertinent meanings. The first is the noun *Sulalah* which has to do with lineage and heredity and the other is the verb *Salla* which denotes gentle extraction of something. In their prose and poetry, Arabs use the verb *Salla* to denote the graceful pulling of a sword from its sheath. A very similar scenario takes place with regards to the male sperm when we come to know that only one single spermatozoon is required (extracted/attracted) to penetrate the ovum's outer layer and fuse with its nucleus[2]. The *microscopic* fact that only a very small quantity of sperm is needed to merge with the ovum is unequivocally stated in chapter 75 verse 37, which reads:

"Was not he (man) a drop of sperm emitted".

So from the pithy root of 'Sulalatin', three key concepts are effectively delivered:

1- Quintessence of clay, the earliest composite of 'physical' human existence.

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[1] Quran: 32:8. **The Quran uses the adjective** "Maheen" to emphasize the irony of creating a noble and intelligent creature from a substance which humans tend to look down on as they grow up!

[2] Naik, Zakir (2007) *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible*? Darussalam, p. 65.

2- Extraction of fertilizing fluid, that is the infinitely small quantity of liquid extracted to ensure fertilization[1].

3- The genealogical process of extracting and transmitting genetic information.

Out of the quintessence of clay emerged the substance of *Mani* (semen), which, after the first creation, is continuously reproduced in the testicles. Because this fluid is *continuously* reproduced, the Quran (56:58:59) describes the reproduction process in the present simple tense (create = Takhluq), a grammatical device emphasizing continuity[.

Implantation

Once the egg has been fertilized in the fallopian tube, it descends and lodges itself inside the uterus. This process is called the ‗implantation of the egg'. Implantation is a result of the development of *villosities,* which, like roots in the soil, draw nourishment from the wall of the uterus and make the egg literally cling to the womb. The process of implantation is appropriately described in several Quranic verses by the word *„alaq,* which is also the title of the chapter in which one of the verses appears:

"(Allah) fashioned humans from a clinging entity"[2]

] The Quran mentions a stage where 'Amshaj' evolves into an 'Alaqah', which literally stands for three meanings, all

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[1] *The Bible The Quran And Science*, Maurice Bucaille, Kazi Publications, Lahore, p. 199.
[2] Quran: 96:2.

accurately expressive of three vital embryological phenomena. These three meanings of *Alaqah* are as follows:

1- Something that clings or suspends from; and so does the embryo in its earliest stages. It is made to cling to the mother's womb and not left to swim freely inside it. See the figure below[(1)], where the embryo is appears suspending inside the white area.

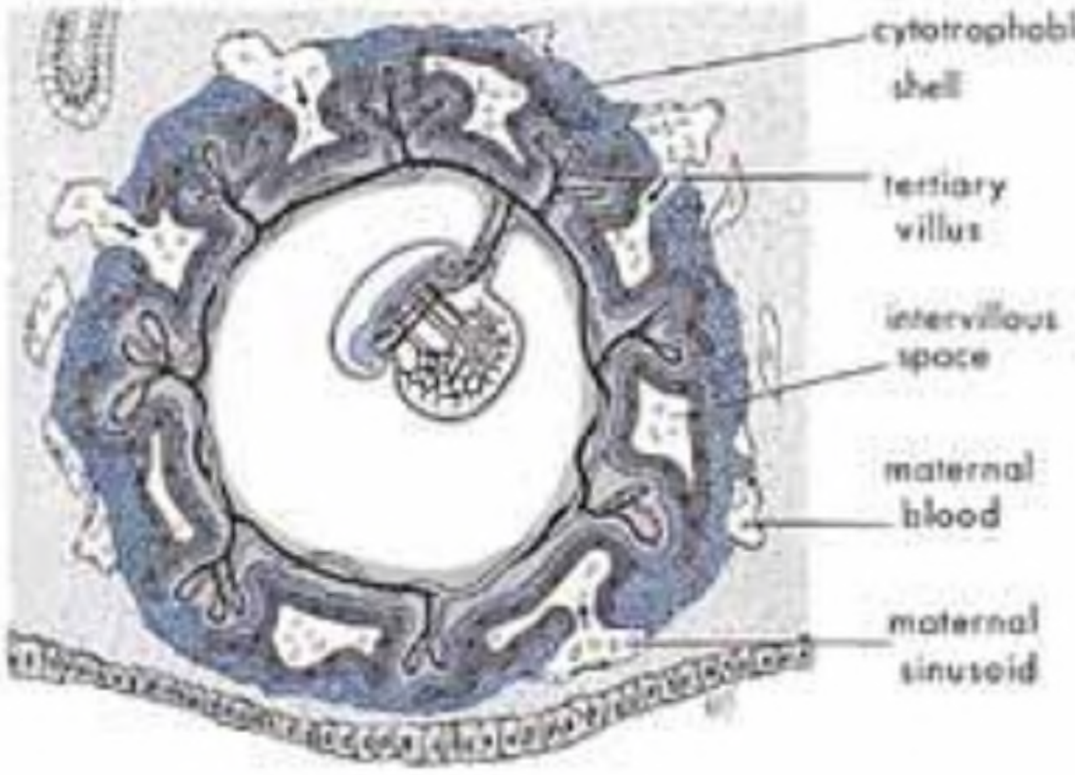

Figure 1: The embryo suspending**.**

2- The worm-like creature known as the 'leech', and this is meant as a close simile to describe the embryo's shape which is strikingly similar to the leech form and to explain the embryo's clinging to the womb in order to feed on nutrition carried in the mother's blood, just as a leech would do when it "fixes itself to the skin of animals in order to drink their blood"[(2)]. See the figure below.

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(1) By courtesy of: *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, Darussalam, Houston, 1997.
Please note that the following images in this section are by courtesy of the same source.

(2) *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2003, p. 919.

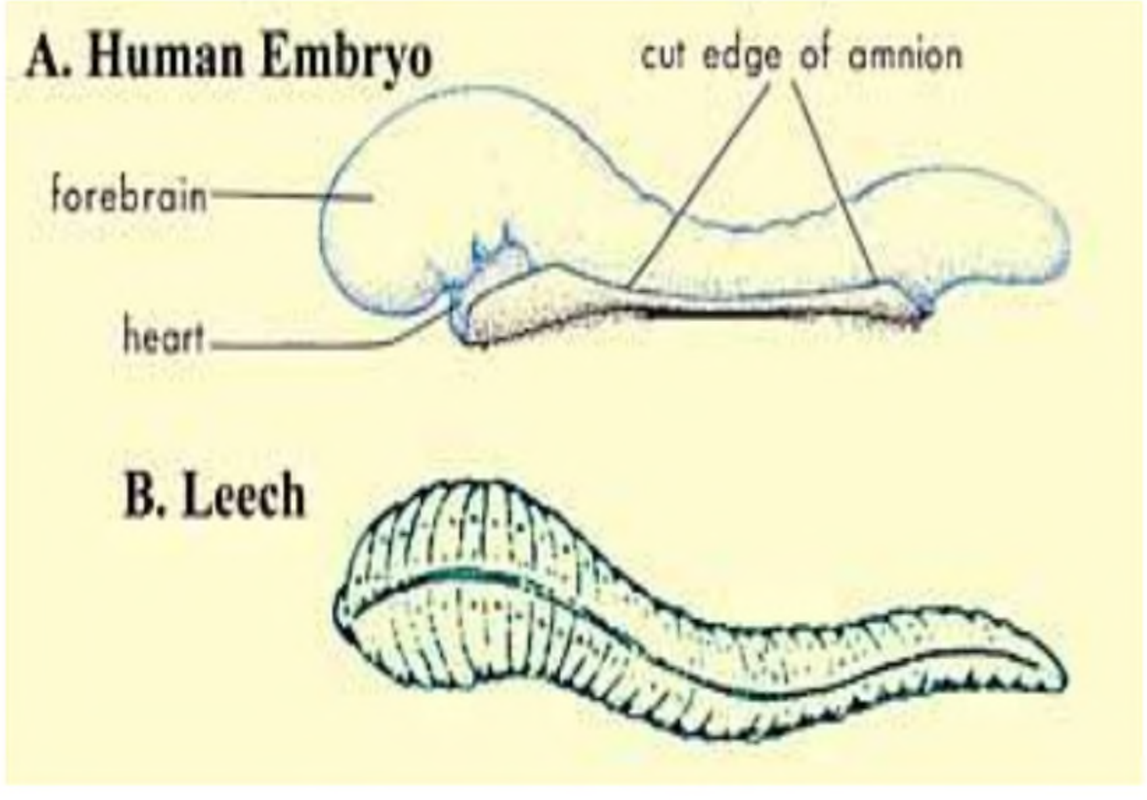

Figure 2: Professor Keith Moore had no idea that the embryo at the *Alaqah* stage was strikingly similar to a leech. He only came to know this through the Quran.

3- Blood clot. Large amounts of blood are delivered to the embryo when it's about 15 days old. At this stage, it is almost identical to a blood clot, because the blood profusion is almost stagnant inside the embryo. The circulation of blood only starts by the end of the third week. This meaning is also related to the second because if we were to open up the body of a leech, huge amounts of blood would be found inside in comparison to its size [

Embryo

The evolution of the embryo inside the maternal uterus is only briefly described, but the description is accurate, because the simple words referring to it correspond exactly to fundamental stages in its growth. This is what we read in a verse from the chapter *al-Mu''minoon:*

"We fashioned the clinging entity into a chewed lump of flesh and We fashioned the chewed flesh into bones and We clothed the bones with intact flesh"[1]

The term _chewed flesh' *(mudghah)* corresponds exactly to the appearance of the embryo at a certain stage in its development. It is known that the bones develop inside this mass and that they are then covered with muscle. This is the meaning of the term _intact flesh' (lahm). The embryo passes through a stage where some parts are in proportion and others out of proportion with what is later to become the individual. This is the obvious meaning of a verse in the chapter *Al-Hajj,* which reads as follows:

"I fashioned (humans) a clinging entity, then into a lump of flesh in proportion and out of proportion"[2]

Next, we have a reference to the appearance of the senses and internal organs in the chapter *as-Sajdah:*

"... and (Allah) gave you ears, eyes and hearts"[3]

] The Quran's usage of the word *Mudhghah* vividly illustrates the shape of the embryo at this stage. If one were to take a piece of gum, chew it, and then place it next to an embryo at the 'Mudhghah' stage, he or she would observe the unmistakable similarity between both. In figure 3 below, the somites at the back of the embryo closely resemble the teeth marks left after biting a piece of gum[4]. It is worth mentioning that during this period of development, the age of the embryo

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(1) Quran: 23:14.
(2) Quran: 22:5.
(3) Quran: 32:9.
(4) *A Brief illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, p.8, Darussalam, Houston, 1997. Also see: *Human Development as Described in the* Quran *and Sunnah*, Keith Moore et al., p.37-38.

is expressed in number of somites, which, in turn, are a defining feature of the *Mudhghah*.

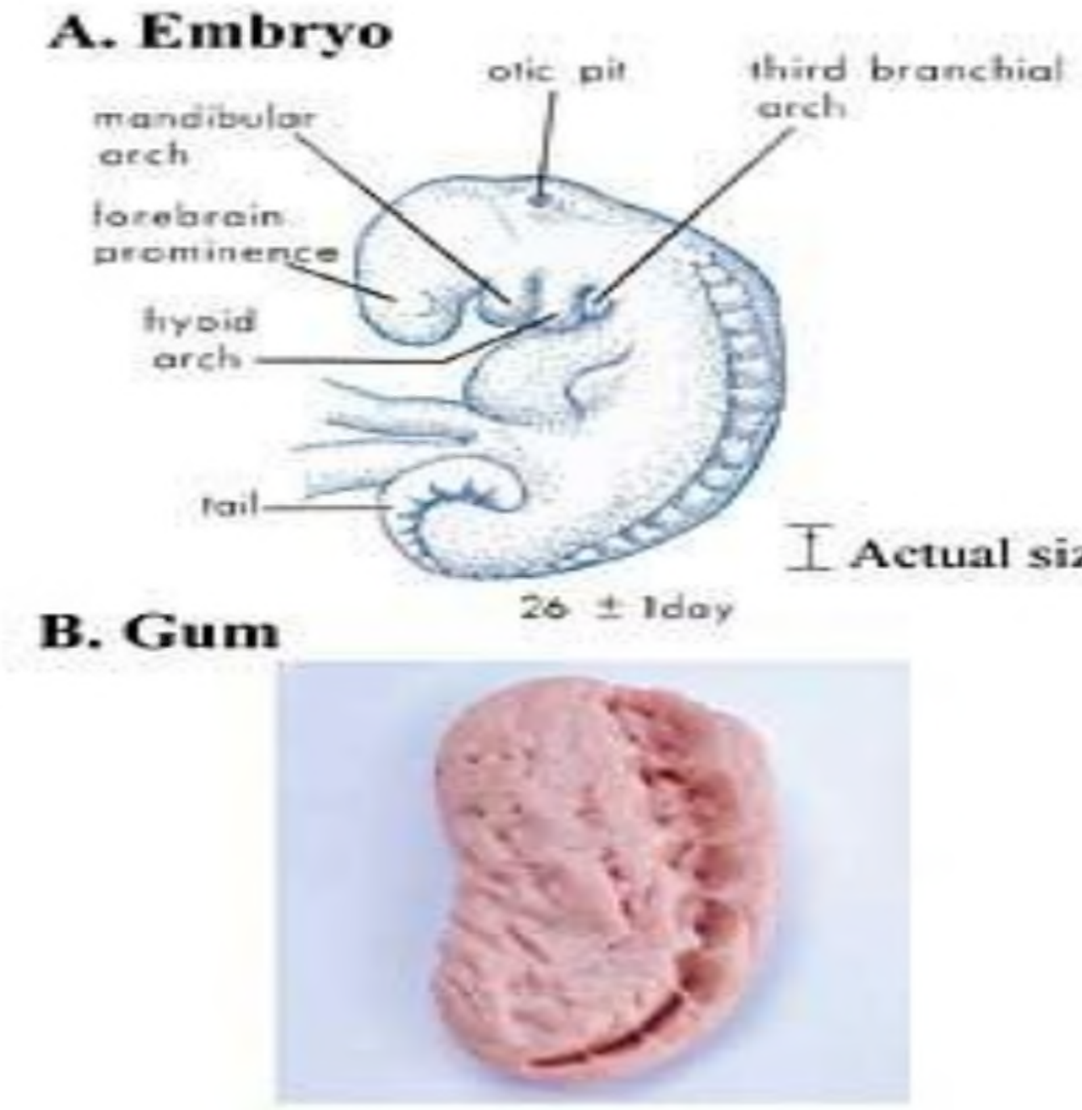

Figure 3: Remarkable similarity between the appearance of a chewed gum and an embryo at the *Mudhghah* (chewed thing) stage.[1]

Each embryonic stage undergoes a specified period of time proportionate with the requirements of its formation. These developmental periods are stated by Prophet Mohammad in the following *Hadith*[2]:

–(As regards creation), every one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for the first forty days, and then he becomes an –Aalaqah" for another forty days, and then a –Mudhghah" for another forty days, and then the soul is breathed into him (given life)…"[3]

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(1) *Ibid*.

(2) A *Hadith* is commonly defined as a transmitted report by the Prophet's companions of what the Prophet said, did, or approved.

(3) *Bukhari*, No.3208.

This Hadith has been studied by Dr. Joe Liegh Simpson, the Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Professor of Molecular and Human Genetics at the Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA. He was astonished that the Prophet, centuries before the invention of the microscope, was capable of providing us with "a specific time table for the main embryological development before forty days"[(1)]. He also affirmed that such knowledge "could not have been obtained on the basis of the scientific knowledge that was available at the time of their writing", hence "it follows", Dr Joe concludes "that not only is there no conflict between genetics and religion, but, in fact, religion can guide science by adding revelation to some of the traditional scientific approaches, that there exist statements in the Quran shown centuries later to be valid, which support knowledge in the Quran having been derived from God"[(2)].

The stage where humans *are brought forth as another creation* (Quran 23:12-14) marks the development of certain sensory organs. This involves the development of sensitivity to certain audiovisual stimuli. In perfect accordance with modern science, the Quran enumerates four learning-related stages according to their sequential development. Respectively, these are: not knowing (*tabula rasa* or blank slate hypothesis), hearing, sight, and cognition. It is now an established fact that babies are born with no acquired knowledge (which is different from the debatable notion of necessary (innate) knowledge). This is called the blank slate hypothesis which likens babies' brains to an immaculate slate, empty of all forms of acquired information. In the Quran's sequencing of postnatal sensory development the infant's hearing is the first sense to develop. Sight or the ability to detect certain visual

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(1) *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, p.28, Darussalam, USA, Houston, 1997.
(2) *Ibid*.

stimuli comes next. The accumulation of received audiovisual (in addition to kinaesthetic) experiences has the effect of augmenting the baby's cognitive as well as affective faculties (*Afidah*, the singular of *Fu'ad*). This developmental sequence (knowing nothing, hearing, sight, and then cognition)[1], articulated in the Quran more than 14 centuries ago, is now corroborated by modern science. The verse relating this fact reads:

> "And it is He who has brought out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and cognition so that you may be grateful"[2] [.

Nothing here contradicts today‘s data and, furthermore, none of the mistaken ideas of the time have crept into the Quran. Throughout the Middle Ages there were a variety of beliefs about human development based on myths and speculations which continued for several centuries after the period. The most fundamental stage in the history of embryology came in 1651 with Harvey‘s statement that –all life initially comes from an egg”. At that time, when science had benefited greatly from the invention of the microscope, people were still arguing about the respective roles of the egg and spermatozoon. Without hesitation, one can say that the Quran's documentation of key stages in human creation is one of the signs which Allah has promised to reveal before the eyes of future generations (Quran 41: 53). We close this chapter with Bucaille who concluded:

–The above observations make the hypothesis advanced by those who see Mohammad as the author of the Quran quite untenable. How could a man, from being illiterate, become the

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(1) Modern research, however, has shown that the fetus' auditory acuity is also sensitive to certain sounds, especially the mother's voice. But this sensitivity – in contrast to what's discussed above - is only an involuntary detection of sounds. It is the baby hearing not listening.

(2) Quran: 16:78.

most important author, in terms of literary merit, in the whole of Arabic literature? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at the time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncements on the subject?"[1]

In his other book *What is the Origin of Man*? and after examining a multitude of verses on the origin of life, Bucaille also concludes:

"Thus the statements in the Quran on the origins of life, whether referring to life in general, the element that gives birth to the plants in the soil, or the seed of animals, are strictly in accordance with modern scientific data"[2].

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[1] *The Bible The* Quran *And Science*, Maurice Bucaille, Kazi Publications, Lahore. p. 125.

[2] Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science & the Holy Scriptures*, IBS, India, p. 167.

Meaning, Purpose, and Human Life

> "Indeed, there might be good grounds for arguing that the root of our problem was our success in making life an end rather than a means to something higher".
>
> (Carroll Quigley, 1961)[1]

Zakir Naik, a contemporary Indian Islamic scholar, accurately diagnosis the mentality of a typical atheist. He says:

"It is the Atheist who is wasting his life. His life has no purpose but temporary enjoyment. But such enjoyment is always tempered by nagging doubts about whether or not life is heading in the right direction"[2].

The hopeless situation of an atheist is more vivid when juxtaposed to the situation of an ardent believer in purpose and meaning. "Frankly, I am psychologically incapable of believing that the universe is meaningless", says Wen Gingerich, Professor of Astronomy and History of Science at Harvard University and a senior astronomer emeritus at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, in response to the question: "Does the Universe Have a Purpose?" [3].

Indeed, every thoughtful person will tell you that there is more to the meaning of life than what meets the eye. Even the most adamant atheists *behave* as if life is not simply the sum of its own materialistic parts. In his seminal article *On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism*, Jacques Maritain supplies a perceptive analysis of the atheistic mindset. He manages to

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[1] Quigley, Carroll (1961) *The Evolution of Civilizations*, p. 406.
[2] Talking to Atheists @ <www.edawa.com/cms> accessed: 17 March, 2008.
[3] Gingerich,Wen. Does The Universe Have A Purpose? John Templeton Foundation @ < http://www.templeton.org/purpose> accessed: 14/4/2009.

demonstrate that most of the subjects claiming to be atheists are practically *pseudo-atheists*. That is they "believe that they do not believe in God but who in reality unconsciously believe in Him, because the god whose existence they deny is not God but something else"[1].

Earlier in this book, we have seen how difficult it is to accept atheism as a natural expression of human nature. If one wishes to accept this conclusion, it follows that life must not only have a meaning but also have a deeply significant one. This is corroborated by acknowledging our unique position in the universe, and we have seen how this is demonstrable through the Anthropic Cosmological argument, our position in the logarithmic scale of sizes of different objects, the human loathing for the idea of meaninglessness, and the confirmation of the final revelation, the Quran:

> "Did you think that We have created you for nothing and that you would not be brought back to Us?"[2]

No rational person would prefer misery to happiness. Happiness, regardless of how people may attain this most wanted value, is the ultimate goal of human activity. Even the most hard-headed scientists whether they are atheists, agnostics, existentialists, or believers, obtain their own derivative of happiness from problem-solving activities, theorization, and successful experimentation.

This realization, however, is an anathema to existentialists who view the world as utterly absurd and devoid of meaning. The existentialist movement gained impetus in the mid-twentieth century through such genres as the 'theatre of the absurd'[3]. This trend found expression in such influential

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[1] Maritain, Jacques (1949) On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Jul.), p. 267-268.

[2] Quran: 23:115.

[3] A theatre which represents human existence as an absurdity in a meaningless universe.

works as Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. Existentialists, nevertheless, paradoxically contradict and undermine their own philosophy when they set out to explore the world they happen to live in. In other words, they vehemently argue that the world is meaningless, but remain silent about whether life is worth exploring, appreciating, or living, because, and this is ironic, they themselves regard their own existentialist outlook worthy of consideration! Whether this fact is clear to them or not, they just feel that life is worth the struggle. Why should a meaningless universe be worth the struggle?

Murad Wilfired Hoffmann had rightly noted that –the post-industrial world produces virtually everything except answers to the most essential questions about life and existence: where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?"[1]

Professor Guthrie has witnessed many psychiatrists telling their patients that "they (and eventually everyone) have to deal with one basic, deeply spiritual question sometime or another. It is the question of, "why am I here?"[2]. Science today is ever more cognizant of the universe as a meaningful habitat for human denizens. This is acknowledged in the rhetorical question: Why should our universe exist in a manner that enables the emergence and survival of intelligent beings like us? Questions like these arise from the "increasing recognition that the laws of physics and the constants that are embedded in these laws all seem exquisitely –fine tuned" to allow, or to enable, the existence of stars and planets and the emergence of life and mind"[3].

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[1] Hoffmann, M. (2001) *Religion on the Rise: Islam in the Third Millennium*, amana publications, p. 89

[2] Guthrie, Gary D. (1997) *The Wisdom Tree: A Journey to the Heart of God*, Ocean Tree Books, p. 11.

[3] Kuhn, Robert L Lawrence (2007) Why This Universe? Toward a Taxonomy of Possible Explanations, *Skeptic*, V.13, No. 2, p.28.

Our universe is fine-tuned to permit the existence of mankind, why?

Meaning in human life is so essential that it would be redundant, banal, and surely irrational to explain why. However, different people, cultures, and religions have differing views as to which belief system possesses the most meaningful and coherent worldview. What is it that permeates human life with the most meaningful meaning? Mainstream answers may include:

- **Science**. Some people believe that modern psychology has succeeded in showing that human values, spiritual inclinations, virtues, and morality are the result of evolutionary dynamics, and therefore have no 'real' or 'independent' existence[(1)]. Evangelical sociobiology, the driving force behind *all* 'behavioral genetics', tries to argue that 'human decency is animal' and that 'helping the sick and the weak, sacrifice, and other acts of benevolence and

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[(1)] Lang, Jeffrey (2000) *Struggling to Surrender*, Amana publications, p. 21.

philanthropy have emerged through the process of natural selection[1].

According to the positivist mindset, noted William H. Mallock in 1880, we exist in a universe in which both science and history are sullen, blind, and dumb towards us[2]. To people adopting this view, virtue, love, justice, and mercy are nothing but biochemical states and it's just a matter of time before they eternally disappear with our dead bodies. "Evolutionary psychologists seek to root personal qualities such as altruism and aggression in Darwinian mechanisms of random mutation and natural selection"[3], writes Paul Davies, professor of natural philosophy at Macquarie University. Yet, Davies sensibly warns against a potential ethical danger if one chose to adopt the aforementioned approach. He cautions "that there is the acute risk that they (i.e. Darwinian/evolutionary explanations) will be oversimplified and used to justify an anything-goes attitude to criminal activity, ethnic conflict, even genocide"[4]. More importantly, science alone is incapable of giving satisfactory answers to moral and spiritual questions, especially those profound questions which appertain to human existence as a whole. Ken Wilber pinpoints the areas where science is completely bankrupt:

"There is a strange and curious thing about scientific truth. As its own proponents constantly explain, science is basically value-free. It tells us what *is,* not what *should be* or *ought to be.* An electron isn‘t good or bad, it just is; the cell‘s nucleus is not good or bad, it just is; a solar system isn‘t good or bad, it just is. Consequently science, in elucidating

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(1) Miles, James (1998) Unnatural Selection**,** *Philosophy*, Vol. 73, No. 286. (Oct), p. 595.
(2) Mallock, William H. (1880) *Is Life Worth Living*? New York, p. 319.
(3) Davies, Paul (2004) Undermining Free Will, *Foreign Policy,* No. 144. (Sept. - Oct.), p. 36-37.
(4) *Ibid*.

or describing these basic facts about the universe, has virtually nothing to tell us about good and bad, wise and unwise, desirable and undesirable"[1].

Margarte Wheately, in her *Finding Our Way*, a book which blends science and philosophy with daily experience, jadedly wrote:

"As our age has become more chaotic and complex, we‘ve turned for answers to the contemporary god worshiped by Western culture, science. We‘ve asked science to explain how to deal with chaos, catastrophes, and life‘s unpredictability. We want science to teach us how to prevent the sudden events that suddenly destroy lives and futures. We want science not just to explain chaos but to give us tools for controlling it. We want science to stop us from aging and dying and to get us out of all life‘s challenges. But of course, this god of science can only fail us"[2].

• **Hedonism**. Yes! Many people confine the meaning of life to full-time indulgence in worldly pleasures. The more extreme version of addiction to material luxuries and carnal joys is called egoistic hedonism, an ethical theory promoting worldly temporal happiness as the ultimate goal of all human conduct. But this obviously ignores the patent fact that human beings are more than waste baskets, food processors, or sexual objects. Sorry to say, it overlooks the fact that we are beings with unique moral, spiritual, rational dispositions. In her book *The Fourth Instinct*, Arianna Huffington wisely clarifies what makes us special as she writes:

"Give a gibbon a mate, a peaceful stretch of jungle and plenty of figs to munch on, and he will most likely live in contentment for the rest of his days. Give a man or a woman an environment correspondingly idyllic - say, a successful

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[1] Wilber, K. (1998) *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion*, p. 5.

[2] Wheatley, Margaret J. (2007) *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, p. 125.

career, adorable children and all the comfort civilization has to offer – and we feel dissatisfied, restless and vaguely aware that there is something very important missing from our lives"[1].

In reaction to the moral-spiritual crisis afflicting the West, Jędrzej Giertych, the Polish politician, journalist and writer, lamented:

"The Western civilization is now endangered. First of all, the life of the Western world itself has become transformed by becoming more and more materialist... Clearly, the Western world now treads the path towards disintegration: ultimately it is impossible to live only for material aims, and a hedonistic society no longer aware of its spiritual foundations cannot last"[2].

• **Success and achievement**. To most if not all people success and achievement represent highly meaningful experiences. Innovation, discovery, investigation, problem-solving, effective planning, management, and execution of affairs, and all feats of human endeavor would be ashes in the wind had there been no deep sense of satisfaction with achieving success. This is profoundly indicative of a deep human need for meaning and value. But like all desirable things in the present world, success and achievement, no matter how fulfilling, humane, or philanthropic, are valueless commitments as long as they don't serve a higher end and have an everlasting benefit beyond the temporary world we live in. What value should we allocate to human striving if it is no more than a mirage in the wasteland of eternity?

• **Religion**. Many people derive a large portion of meaning from religious experience. But there are many varieties of religious experience and they differ in how they

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[1] Quoted in Preston, David L. (2005) *365 Ways to Be Your Own Life Couch*, howtobooks, p. 34.

[2] Koneczny, Feliks (1962) *On the Plurality of Civilizations*, Polonica Publications, London, p. 9.

satisfy different human needs. Every religion revolves around a central object, person, concept, or divinity. But let us not forget the maxim that ultimate truth can only be one. This does not mean that all religions are completely devoid of truth. Every religion has some elements of truth in it, but these bits and pieces do not satisfy the agitated truth-seeker who aspires to form an integrated and all-embracing worldview. One may appreciate this in the light of two examples: Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhist teachings regard human existence on this earth as an evil that has to be faced. This is both a pessimistic and fragmentary understanding of life[1]. Similarly, Christianity teaches the doctrine that human beings are inevitably born with a stain of evil (Original Sin); that they are genetically guilty and they can only be salvaged through Atonement[2]. Strict asceticism in Christianity and harsh self-abnegation in some eastern traditions, have also offered a sense of meaning which, in reaction to such austerity, sent many people fleeing in the opposite direction to seek meaning in the epicurean world of material pleasure. Despite the importance of faith, all religions – except Islam as we will see later – **fail to address the human condition as a whole** for many reasons some of which have been discussed earlier.

Now that we have discussed the centrality of meaning in human life, we turn to a more pressing question:"if life has a

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[1] Arthur Schopenhauer, the patron of pessimist philosophy, believed that human beings have "come into this world to pay the penalty of crime committed in another state of existence" (Schopenhauer, A. (2005) *Studies in Pessimism*, Pennsylvania State University, p. 16).

[2] John S. Blackie summarizes the repercussions of this doctrine: "By the fall of man, as theologians teach, the human race lies under a curse, and, so long as this curse remains, life, though enjoyed in a low way by unregenerate persons, is in reality a curse rather than a blessing ; and becomes a blessing only to those who are redeemed from the curse by faith in Christ Jesus and the moral regeneration produced through that faith" (Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 130).

meaning, then why are we here?" Possible answers would be: to eat, drink, and live before we die, to enjoy life, to struggle for survival, to explore nature and invade space, to increase material progress, to develop the biotechnology that would enhance human longevity, to conserve the environment…the answers are many yet they hardly address the demands of spirituality. The word *Dunya*, iterated more than 110 times in the Quran, means the 'lower material world'. It denotes the inferiority of the present life compared to the more superior life Allah has spared for those who give purpose and meaning to their lives, a meaning that extends beyond the confines of material satisfaction.

Such people, the Quran describes, are those:

> "...who believe in the Ghiab (the unseen world), establish prayer...and sincerely believe in the Hereafter"[1]. They are ones who "remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): "Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose"[2].

Steven Pinker, although an outspoken atheist, has recognized that:

"Man does not live by bread alone, nor by know-how, safety, children, or sex. People everywhere spend as much time as they can afford on activities that, in the struggle to survive and reproduce, seem pointless"[3].

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[1] Quran: 2: 2-3.
[2] Quran: 3:191.
[3] *How the Mind Works*, 1999, Penguin Books, p. 521.

In the same vein wrote James H. Leuba:

"Man will have life, and have it abundantly, and he has learned from experience that its sources are not only in meat and drink, but also in spiritual faith"[(1)].

By nature, people are ready to do whatever it takes to live happily. They would borrow money to travel for recreation or buy a new car. They would play sports, dance, sing, listen to music, watch television, camp, hitchhike, or go to malls, cinemas, discotheques, parks, zoos, theatres, museums, galleries, parties, churches, nightclubs, or engage in serious activities like studying, researching, exploring, experimenting, trading, and so on. Despite all of this, true happiness is either incomplete or entirely missing, and some may try what the collective conscience would brand as 'abnormal methods'[(2)]. Fed up, they would turn to drugs, masochism, stringent asceticism, or after a long shabby life, conclude the whole fantasia with the saddest postludes: commit suicide; Ernest Hemingway, Kurt Cobain, Heath Ledger to name a few.

"We played God with our lives and lost the source of all inspiration, the breath of life".

(Wheatley, Margret: 2007)

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(1) Leuba, James H. (1912) *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future*, Macmillan Company, p. 125.

(2) In their desperate search for peace and happiness, people are "fleeing in droves from the churches with set liturgies, organ music, and ministers in robes towards those that offer fiery preaching, noisy music and telegenic men in suits" (*The Economist*, p. 62, December 21st : 2002 - January 3rd : 2003). In search of peace and happiness, piteous man will try every 'abnormal method', including bizarre worship.

Islam and the Meaning of Life

> "Biologists rejoice to mortify us by saying that we are but an aggregation of cells and so is the amoeba; then, they show us by the microscope that our cells and the amoeba's cells are just alike".
>
> (More, Louis: 1925)[1]

Hedonism, mundane eudemonism, naturalism and all the theories which limit moral worth to the confines of mortal life are the Muslim's *bête noire*[2]. In his view, to embrace any of them is to set other gods besides Allah as the guide and norm of human action…"to be a Muslim is to precisely perceive God alone (that is, the Creator, and not nature and the creature) as normative, His will alone as commandment, His pattern alone as constituting the ethical desiderata of creation", writes Isma'il Raji, the well-known Islamic scholar and comparative religion expert[3].

In Islam, the deep meaning of life gushes from the eternal fountain of *Tawheed*. The One God who created lifeless matter is the same God who created life and death, birth and growth, love and mercy, and human existence is but one little chapter in the voluminous book of creation. Our story began

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(1) More, Louis T. (1925) *The Dogma of Evolution*, Princeton University Press, p. 243.

(2) "Religiosity may change the very basis of meaning in life", reveals a recent study (Koole et al.: 2010, p. 102) "by shifting people's focus away from hedonic concerns about the pursuit of pleasure toward eudemonic concerns about living according to one's core values or authentic self". Koole et al. also point out that "consistent with a religious shift away from hedonic concerns, positive affect predicts meaning in life more strongly among individuals with high rather than low religious involvement" (Koole, S. L. et al. (2010) Why Religion's Burdens Are Light: From Religiosity to Implicit Self-Regulation; *Personality and Social Psychology Review*; 14(1) 95 –107).

(3) Faruqi, R. (1995) *AL Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 15.

with Allah (*Bismillah*) and ends with Allah (*Al-Hamdulilah*). According to the Quran (2:30) Allah declares to His angels his intention of creating the world and placing therein a vicegerent (Adam) who will be asked to fulfill His will. The angels object that such a vicegerent who would kill, pervert the world, and shed blood is unworthy of being created. They also went on to contrast the future vicegerent with themselves, hoping that by showing their utter obedience the creation of the aforementioned vicegerent would become redundant, to which Allah answers, "I know something which you do not know"(Quran: 2:30). Allah fully knew beforehand that man would do evil for that was his prerogative as a free being. Indeed, for anyone to fulfill the divine will when it is perfectly in his capacity to do otherwise is to fulfill a yet higher and worthier portion of the divine will. The angels are ruled out precisely because they lack the slightest freedom to disobey their Creator.

Still, the rest of the story can better be appreciated against the backdrop of another dramatic scenario (Quran: 33:72) where God offers His trust to the heavens and earth who, in return, recoil in fear that they would not be able to shoulder the responsibility of keeping the trust. But man, the only remaining candidate, decides to enter the covenant and accept the trust. The trust which neither heaven nor earth can shoulder is the moral law which demands freedom on the part of the agent. Nature, in contrast to human beings, cannot violate the natural law for these two (i.e. nature and natural laws) are essentially the one and same thing. Humans, on the other hand, are capable of both violating themselves (e.g. cognitive dissonance, dissimulation, and hypocrisy) and going against Allah's will. Of all the creatures known so far, only human beings can satisfy the prerequisites of moral

responsibility and at the heart of all prerequisites rests freedom or, more accurately, adequate free-will[1].

Every self-conscious person will agree that human beings are responsible for their actions; even existential theorists include this condition as part of the conventional definition of existentialism. According to the Quran (41:46), human beings operate in a sphere of choice where the stakes of doing good or falling into evil are almost equal. Hence, every sane person, given adequate freedom (i.e. freed from influential coercive forces) enjoys adequate volition to commit evil when good is equally reachable. Human beings not only enjoy freedom, but also a strong inclination towards positive morality. We are morally conscious of an ineradicable sense of obligation towards ourselves, others, and the environment. Even those who deny the good-and-evil binary - on the grounds that both are purely relativistic qualities - cannot rid themselves of their preferred moral and ethical scruples. In short, our actions and dealings would be pointless in the absence of a definite moral code.

Human beings and other species share many biological and behavioral characteristics. This should not haunt the learned Muslim as the Quran already states this fact very clearly (Quran: 6:38). Yet, human beings radically surpass all other species not exclusively by virtue of their intelligence but primarily with respect to their ethico-moral aptitude. The manifestations indicative of being dignified with such an honorable status reveal themselves, according to the Quran (17:70), in man's ascendancy compared to other creatures and the privilege to benefit from the provisions that suit his rank as a human being.

> "We have honored the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good

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[1] Faruqi, R. (1995) *AL Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 4-5.

and pure, and preferred them to many of what We have created with a marked preferment"[1].

Despite being conferred such superiority, the Quran counterpoises man's feelings of excess pride by reminding him of his weaknesses (Quran: 4:28) and the fact that he shares this planet with kingdoms of species like his (Quran: 6:38). In fact, we are emphatically reminded that we are not the center of all realties, nor the ultimate end of all existence, for we are just a 'possible' form of life which could have been replaced by other forms of being (Quran: 14:19).

In his *Descent of Man*, Darwin could not help marvelling at the nobility of human morality. He passionately wrote:

"I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important. This sense, as Mackintosh remarks, "has a rightful supremacy over every other principle of human action"; it is summed up in that short but imperious word "ought," so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man"[2].

We should not be troubled whether our moral conscience or religious experiences are biologically-based or not. It does not matter whether they partake of physical or non-physical qualities. Whatever the cases and possibilities, Allah cannot be ruled out. What really matters is that they exist and they predispose us to behave in very important ways. We can learn an important lesson from the Quran. The Quran relates the stroy of the unbelievers approaching the Prophet and asking him about the nature of the soul. In essence, their question was pedantic and practically irrelevant because the answer would have no practical benefit. It won't change anything.

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[1] Quran: 17:70.

[2] Darwin, Charles (2004) *The Descent of Man*, Penguin Classics, p. 120.

Suppose they were told that the soul was made of particles, molecules, and genes. Or suppose they were told it was made of a substance their minds will never be capable of comprehending. In the final analysis, what practical results can be gained and how would the answer bear directly on the way we live and behave towards one another? Suppose we discover that lying and cheating originated from genetically-based mechanisms, should that entail an automatic disregard for honesty and personal integrity?[1] The answer is a resounding "No". As Donald M. Broom puts it, "the existence of a biological explanation does not devalue spirituality"[2].

So how did the Quran reply to the disbelievers' request? The reply was:

> "They ask you about the soul. Say: the soul is one thing the knowledge of which is with my Lord. And little it is the knowledge you have been given"[3].

Ibnul-Qayim in his fascinating book *Tareequl-Hijratain* (The Path of the Two Migrations) said that if good and evil did not exist or had they acquired a meaning which is radically different from the one we know, we would have existed in a completely different world because the events of the present

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[1] Many present-day evolutionary zealots find themselves tongue-tied in the face of the fact that "human societies change far too rapidly for the differences between them to be accounted for by genetic differences between their members", relates James Miles. Richard Dawkins, a contemporary hard-line evolutionist, admits that man's way of life is largely shaped by culture rather than it is by genes (see Miles, James (1998) Unnatural Selection**,** *Philosophy*, Vol. 73, No. 286. (Oct), p. 601).

[2] Broom, Donald M. (2003) *The Evolution of Morality and Religion*, Cambridge University Press, p. 29. The well-known Joseph E. LeDoux, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology at New York University, also opines that "a spiritual view of the self isn't (or doesn't have to be) completely incompatible with a biological one" (LcDoux, J. E. (2002) *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are*, Penguin p. 15).

[3] Quran 17: 85.

world happen in a way which is significantly conducive to our understanding of good and evil[1].

In other words, the world is created in a manner which both enables the existence of such qualities and enables us to make sense of them. All are interlocked: morality, we and the universe. This is why in the Quran (23:115) a relationship is established between our universe and the meaning of human life.

> "We have not created the heaven and earth and all that is between them without a purpose. That is the thought of those who disbelieve?"[2].

Parallel to good and evil is the vital, yet controversial, concept of reward and punishment. The relevant assertion here is that reward and punishment cannot be isolated from the moral responsibility to enforce justice. Justice, constituting the hub of all good morality, is a divine injunction par excellence:

> —Verily, Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice"[3].

> "I believe in the book Allah has sent down and I am commanded to judge among you with justice"[4].

It is our sense of justice that primes our conscience to legitimize rewarding the good and punishing the wrongdoer. Hence, it is out of moral necessity that evildoing is different

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[1] Al-Jowziyah, Ibnul-Qayim (2008) *Tareequl-Hijratain*, Saudi Arabia, p. 217-218.
[2] Quran: 38:27.
[3] Quran: 4: 58.
[4] Quran: 42:15.

from doing good, just as it is out of natural necessity that day is different from night[1]:

> "Is the one who believes like him who does not believe? Never are they equal"[2].

Is it fair to treat equally those who study hard and those who do not? Are those who maintain public tranquillity equal to those who cause public nuisance?

> "...do those who commit evil deeds think that We will make them like those who believed and did good deeds, both in their present life and their life after death? How wicked is the judgment they make!"[3].

Yet, the Quran tells us that we shall not reap the harvest of our deeds before crossing the bridge of death. What we do in the present life, what we believe and desire, and what we wish to become, maps our fate in the afterlife:

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[1] Hobbes and Spinoza - the latter disbelieving in a personal God who was interested in human morality- claimed that we call things good only when they happen to coincide with our interests and subjective judgments. Philosopher A. E. Moore, in line with early Muslim Sunni scholars, convincingly argued that good was intrinsic to some things just as 'yellow' is a color intrinsic to some objects and the fact that some fail to see real goodness is because there's goodness blindness just as there is color blindness. **In summary, the Muslim Sunni stance** regarding good and evil is a moderate one. They believe that good is a real quality intrinsic to some things but we cannot always know it relying on reason alone; **(a)** there is some good that can be known and agreed upon, **(b)** there's some good which is unknown to us, and **(c)** there are situations in which the goodness of something(s) is relative or not always obvious. Revelation, represented in the Quran and the authentic traditions of the Prophet, account for what we *need* to know regarding the latter two. The first is evident and people are expected to maintain it by all lawful means (See Moore A. E. (1959) *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press).

[2] Quran: 32:18-20.

[3] Quran: 45: 21.

"Every soul will taste death. And only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your full recompense. Whosoever is removed from the fire and made to enter paradise is the one who has truly won. And the life of this world is but the amusement of illusion"[1].

Atheists try to convince people that morality can still retain its universal significance and sense of urgency without the need to believe in Allah, but their attempts fall headlong into failure. We necessarily, and even naturally, know that value qualities such as 'significance' and 'urgency' are themselves in need of explanation: Why is morality significant and urgent in the first place and how did this come about? Allah's existence imparts a lasting, binding, and universal imperative to morality. Lifeless matter and human beings, on the other hand, are finite and temporal, so would be the nature of morality associated with their being. The significance of Allah's presence at the heart of moral value is partly captured by Historian Arnold Toynbee's conviction that "man's fragmentary and ephemeral participation in terrestrial history is indeed redeemed for him when he can play his part on Earth as the voluntary coadjutor of a God whose mastery of the situation gives a divine value and meaning to man's otherwise paltry endeavors"[2]. Toynbee uses the noun 'coadjutor' which is not far from the Quran speaking of humans as Allah's vicegerents (*Khalifah*) [3] on earth and believers in particular as His allies (*Aoliyaa*; *Ansar*) [4] in the cause of truth.

Thus, it's completely rational to ascribe the genesis of morality, its nature, and binding character to a Moral Arbiter or Moral Archetype than to ascribe it to an order of existence which is morally impoverished (e.g. matter, adaptation, natural

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[1] Quran: 3: 185.
[2] Toynbee, A. (1957) *A Study of History*, Abridged Volumes VII-X, Oxford University Press, p. 106.
[3] Quran: 2: 30 & 10: 14.
[4] Quran: 61: 14 & 10: 62.

selection, etc). Again, atheists - or some at least - try to get around this terrifying problem by ascribing 'intelligence', 'consciousness', or 'autonomy' to matter, as fantasized in Gregory Bateson's monistic interpretation of being. Still, this does not solve the problem. Morality, as far as human experience permits, is exclusively a property of personal beings and not a property of all being(s).This perfect Archetype of Morality we call Allah.

Contraray to matter, Allah is neither lifeless nor amoral (i.e. lacking in or unconcerned with morality); rather He is The Living (Quran: 2:255) with perfect eternal Attributes (Quran: 59:24); He admires good and dislikes evil (Quran: 16:90) and He caused good and evil to exist in order to test human choice (Quran: 21:35). Hence, if Allah did not exist, "then nothing can be good or evil and nothing can be right or wrong"[1]. Therefore, extreme emphasis is placed on the doctrine of *Tawheed*, the basis of morality and conduct. The belief that Allah is the One and only true God has vital implications for the unitary character of morality. Morality and truth disintegrate when Allah is removed from the center of existence, from the core matter of human life[2].

> "That is because Allah is the Truth and what they invoke besides him is falsehood"[3].

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[1] Wielenberg, Erik J. (2005) *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*, Cambridge University Press, p. 18. Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), the German social theorist of the Frankfurt school, asserted that without the idea of 'God' there would be no absolute meaning, truth, or morality, therefore absolute ethics become a question of taste, mood, or whim and there would be no reason why we should hate injustice or why war is worse than peace (Armstrong, K. (1999) *A History of God*, p. 456).

[2] See Cantwell, Wilfred S. (1963) *The Faith of other Men*, New American Library, p. 61.

[3] Quran: 22:62.

Since "no one can survive in an absolute vacuum, with no goal, no significance, no meaning, no orientation", and since "the gods that people worship are those points of reference that give meaning and context to their lives"[1], to Muslims Allah is the Originator of "the universe, is high above all His creatures and beyond them, and beyond all their imaginings and certainly beyond all their representations. To Muslims He "is The Majestic, The Mighty, The Awe inspiring, The Merciful, and many other things, but above all, for Muslims, He is One. Every other sin may be forgiven, but not that of *shirk*, the failure to recognize that the final truth and power of the universe is one"[2]. Shirk is the antithesis of *tawheed*. It literally means partnership, sharing or association[3]. So to believe that something or somebody may share a quality that is exclusive to Allah alone is to commit *shirk*, the mother of all sins. In fact, to believe in a multiplicity of *ultimate* realities is shirk, for there is only one ultimate reality, Allah the Truth of all truths.

> "That is because Allah is the Truth, and the One who gives life to the dead, and the One is able to do all things"[4].

"Everything in the universe", explains Chittick "comes from Allah and returns to Allah, and everything is utterly and absolutely dependent upon Allah here and now, always and forever, in every time and in every place"[5]. Truly, if people

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[1] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 13.
[2]Cantwell, Wilfred S. (1963) *The Faith of Other Men*, New American Library, p. 55. Philips, B. (2005) *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 43.
[3] Philips, B. (2005) *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 43.
[4] Quran: 22:6.
[5] *Ibid*. p. 30-31.

need to embrace a meaning that puts an end to their frantic search for true happiness, then it should be a meaning that unifies their 'divided selves' and 'scattered parts'.

> "To Allah belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and to Him return all affairs. So worship Him and put full trust in Him. And your Lord is not heedless of what you do"[1].

Connotations of unity such as oneness, singularity, and wholeness characterize the essence of belief in Islam. The hierarchy of existence subsumes many realities, but the highest of all realities is Allah, "*The Exalted in Might*" (Quran: 59:23). The path to Him is the one straight path (*Assiratal-Mustaqeem*). The gate to this path is called *Istislam*, complete submission and surrender, and the key to this gate is the testimony of faith which consists of two segments: *Ashhadu Anna La Ilaha Illa Allah* (I testify that there is no god but Allah), *Wa Ashhadu Anna Mohammadan Abduhu Wa Rasuluh* (and I testify that Mohammad is his Servant and Messenger). The former part of the first segment i.e. *that there is no god…* negates all false gods and deities set up besides Allah. Anything raised to the rank of the Al-Mighty is considered *Baatil* i.e. a falsehood. By rejecting all false deities, the testifier **unifies his submission**. The latter part of the segment i.e. *but Allah* affirms belief in Allah as the only God worthy of sincere worship. By doing so, the testifier **submits to unity**. The combined act of rejecting false gods and submitting to Allah alone is called *tawheed*, from the verb *uwahhidu*: to unify and make one.

Through *Tawheed*, Islam conveys a simple message: believe that Allah is your only true God, believe in His final Messenger, and believe that your earthly striving to do good and avoid evil will not end with death, but will be generously

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[1] Quran: 11: 123.

rewarded in the afterlife. Do not associate false gods with Allah. Do not believe that life is meaningless and worthless for "*that is the attitude of those who disbelieve*"[1]. Do not devote yourself to the *Dunya* and remain heedless of the ultimate goal of life; otherwise, you will sustain eternal loss:

> "The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord is that their works are like ashes, which the wind furiously blows away on a stormy day; they shall have no control over anything of what they used to do. That is the straying, far away (from the Right Path)"[2].

To top it off, "Islam's goal is to bring people back into the presence of God, from which they emerged in the first place. However, everyone is going back into God's presence in any case, so the issue is not going back per se, but how one gets there. Through the Quran and the Sunnah, God guides people back to him in a manner that will ensure their permanent happiness. If they want to follow a ~~–s~~traight path" (*siratal mustaqım*), one that will lead to balance and happiness and not to disequilibrium and misery, they need to employ their minds, awareness, and thinking in ways that harmonize with God himself, the true Reality. If they occupy themselves with illusions and unreality, they will follow a crooked path and will most likely end up where they would not like to go"[3].

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[1] Quran: 38:27.
[2] Quran: 14:18.
[3] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, (edit.), p. 7.

Al-Tawheed: The Essence of Man's Earliest Religion

At the core of the Islamic faith lies the doctrine of *Tawheed*, the belief that Allah is the only true God, that every natural being owes its very existence to this One and only God, and that all moral and creedal imperatives should derive their legitimacy only from the same and One God.

Polytheistic religions have filled every corner in the world for thousands of years. Throughout history, every society has come into contact with some form of polytheism and monotheists (i.e. believers in the One God of everything) remained constantly outnumbered on the global scale. This tendency to deviate from monotheism is an anthropological observation (Jevons: 1896)[1] which comes in perfect agreement with the Quran (12:106 & 6:116). But where did monotheism come from? Anthropologist Frank B. Jevons raised a serious a problem with the evolutionary assumption that monotheism must have developed from earlier forms of polytheism. He correctly observed that the circumstances surrounding all forms of polytheism were completely antithetical to the growth of monotheism. As Jevons remarked:

"The very fact that all other nations have travelled along a line leading to polytheism, and that all have failed to get beyond it, constitutes a presumption that monotheism is not to be reached by the route that leads to polytheism"[2].

One is reasonably justified to conclude that the route to monotheism could never have 'naturally' extended from

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[1] Jevons, F. B. (1896) *An Introduction to the History of Religion*, London, p. 388. According to Jevons, "wherever we can trace its course, we find that every people which has [*sic*] risen above the most rudimentary stages has become polytheistic. This statement holds true of peoples in all quarters of the globe, in all stages of culture, in all ages of time" (p. 383).

[2] *Ibid*: p. 388.

polytheism but was originally paved by the revelations. After polytheism had infested many societies, pure monotheism, the essence of man's earliest religion, was continually reintroduced through God's Messengers, starting with Prophet Noah and ending with Mohammad. Still, the revelations did not expunge polytheistic modes of worship and in some cases the polytheists, adamant not let go of their old ways, became more attached to their faith.

Back in 1929, *Primitive Man*, a journal published by George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research, declared that "the history of religion has been a sort of degeneration or devolution from an early pure and exclusive monotheism"[(1)]. Available evidence revealed that "the concept of God became later broken up into concepts of gods, and these, in turn, broke up into lesser spirits, manism and magic meanwhile appearing on the scene and growing apace"[(2)]. The study supplies strong grounds for supposing that man's earliest religion was "monotheism without accompanying superstitions"[(3)], and that such superstitions have only "come upon the scene at later periods, usually as corruptions of the earlier monotheism"[(4)].

Earlier scholars had arrived at the same discovery. Joseph McCabe, in his book *The Growth of Religion*, cites Sir M. Monier Williams and other religious authorities who point out that "Indian religion, according to the Vedas, begins with monotheism, and is later degraded to the condition of polytheism"[(5)].

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(1) J. M. C (1929) The Origin and Early History of Religion. *Primitive Man*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct.), p. 45, published by The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research.
(2) *Ibid*.
(3) *Ibid*.
(4) *Ibid*.
(5) McCabe, J. (1918) *The Growth of Religion: A Study of its Origin and Development*, Watts & Co. London, p. 191.

McCabe further comments:

"We shall not be surprised to find in any elementary civilization the cult of a single god, raised so far above the cults of other gods as to give the religion a monotheistic complexion"[1].

Arnold Toynbee, the English historian, cites Father Wilhelm Schmidt who had also observed "common elements in the religions of the most primitive surviving peoples, now scattered in holes and corners at opposite extremities of the inhabited surface of the Earth"[2]. In the face of evidence, Schmidt felt persuaded to conclude that "the worship of God which has been brought into the field by the latter-day higher religions **is a revival, not an innovation, and is, in fact, a revival of the earliest religion of mankind**"[3].

From another, yet complementary, perspective, Professor John S. Blackie offers an account of how people deviated from monotheism:

"The moment that a separate God has been assigned to the thunder, and another to the Sun, the creation of an uncounted multitude of separate divine personalities was as natural and necessary as the growth of a broad-branching tree from a small seed"[4].

Abdullah Ibn-Abbas, the Prophet Mohammed's cousin and one of the most knowledgeable authorities in Islam, reported key historical events in the course of the deviation from pure monotheism. Ibn-Abbas recounts that during the era between Adam and Noah, there were righteous monotheists who were highly respected by the members of their community. When these righteous people passed away, their followers, who used to honour them and adhere to their guidance, made statues of

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(1) *Ibid*.
(2) Toynbee, A. (1956) *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 20.
(3) *Ibid*. (emphasis mine).
(4) Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, p. 88.

them as an act of remembrance. They believed that these carved images would continuously remind them of their leaders' righteousness. However, when this generation of followers passed away, the next was bluffed into worshipping those idols, and therefrom grew the tree of *Shirk* i.e. worshipping other than Allah[1].

Charles L. Henning, arriving thirteen centuries after Ibn-Abbas, addressed the same topic in his essay *On the Origin of Religion*. Interestingly, he gave an almost verbatim account of what happened:

"In every man lives an inclination for the improvement of his condition. Only a few were able to find a way to effect this, and these after their death became "heroes" or "benefactors" of their respective tribes. The veneration they enjoyed during life changed after their death into "ancestor worship" and later on into "soul worship"[2].

To provide a concrete example, Charles Seignobos cites the case of Buddhism:

"It no longer satisfied the Buddhists to honor their founder as a perfect man; they made him a god, erecting idols of him, and offering him worship. They adored also the saints, his disciples; pyramids and shrines were built to preserve their bones, their, teeth, their cloaks. From every quarter the faithful came to venerate the impression of the foot of Buddha"[3].

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[1] *Bukhari*: No. 4920.
[2] Henning, Charles L. (1898) On the Origin of Religion. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 11, No. 12 (Dec.), p. 381.
[3] Seignobos, Charles (1906) *History of Ancient Civilization*, Translated by Arthur Herbert Wilde, New York, (edit.) p. 62.

A panoramic view of Muslims at Makkah praying in unison to the One true God.

Unity and Simplicity: Hallmarks of Truth

The noun 'Islam' is self-explanatory. It is not named after a person[1], an invented religion[2], ideology[3], or philosophy[4]. In short, Islam promulgates a message that transcends the confines of time and space. It is not only the religion of mankind but also the religion of the entire universe:

> "Do they seek a religion other than Allah's religion while to Him has submitted whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly. And to Him shall they all be returned"[5].

All humans, in normal circumstances, are born with a natural longing for truth. That is they are incapable of imagining life without meaning. Moreover, they appear to be aware of the fact that ultimate truth must be one, simple, universal and therefore accessible to all. People like simplicity and they simplify whenever they could. Let us propound an example from science. In modern cosmology, two competing theories propose to explain the end of the universe. One is the Big Crunch theory, where the universe, due to huge gravitational pull, is destined to shrink and implode inwardly; yet the other theory assumes an on-going expansion, where the universe keeps expanding until it disintegrates and fades away. Both theories present two probable explanations, but we cannot assert that both, the Big Crunch and on-going

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[1] E.g. Christianity named after Jesus Christ, Buddhism after Buddha, Confucianism after Confucius, Marxism after Marx and Judaism after the tribe of Judah. However, it should be noted that anti-Islamic campaigns tend to mislabel Islam as Wahhabism, after the son of Abdul-Wahhab, an eighteenth century reformer. Hamilton Gibb authored the book *Mohammedanism*, also another misnomer.
[2] E.g. mormonism, pantheism, animism, monism, etc.
[3] E.g. liberalism, communism, etc.
[4] E.g. existentialism, constructivism, realism, idealism, etc.
[5] Quran: 83: 3.

expansion, are correct. Either one is right or both are wrong. There might be other probable scenarios to the end of the universe, **but scientists prefer to exclude them on account of simplicity**. According to Occam's razor, a philosophical principle widely applied in science, "the best explanation of an event is the one that is simplest"[(1)]. Philosopher Richard Swinburne examined the principle of simplicity in his *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth* and found out that among theories of equal plausibility "it is more evident that the simplest theory is the one most likely to be true". "The principle of simplicity", concludes Swinburne" is a fundamental synthetic a priori truth"[(2)].

Moreover, an important feature of simplicity is that it is deeply associated with unity. When we simplify we actually move from multitude, complexity, and the chaos of diversity to oneness, singularity, and the harmony of pattern[(3)]. In Islam, unity and simplicity underpin three domains: the domain of belief represented in Tawheed, the individual's outlook on life, and the ground of all realities. Behind the apparent variety observed in nature, there is only one unique Designer. To the Muslim, all people, all creatures, all affairs, come from and return to Allah.

"And to Allah belongs the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth, and to Him return all affairs"[(4)].

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(1) *Merriam-Webster*, 1988, p. 937.
(2) Swinburne, R. (1997) *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth,* Marquette University Press, p. 51, 56.
(3) Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle (1997) in their *Psychology of Religious Behavior, Belief and Experience* observed that one of the most important features underlying religious experience is the deep feeling "that there is a unity in the whole of creation" (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle (1997) *The Psychology of Religious Behavior, Belief and Experience*, Routledge, p. 96).
(4) Quran: 11:123.

In his *Theology Explained*, and in total agreement with the principle of *Tawheed*, Timothy Dwight was clearly mindful of the reciprocal and logical relation between Allah's Oneness and nature's unity:

"The unity of design and agency in creation and providence **furnishes another argument in proof of the existence of but one God**. So far as we are able to understand the works of creation and providence, we discern a *general simplicity* and harmony in the nature and operation of all things"[(1)].

"When people refuse to live in harmony with the transcendent principles that determine the way things actually are", says Chittick "they bring about chaos and disorder in the natural and social environments. The Quran sums up the process in the verse, ~~–C~~orruption has appeared in the land and the sea because of what the hands of people have earned" (30:41). ~~–C~~orruption" (*fasad*) is defined as the lack of ~~–w~~holesomeness" (*Ṣalah*), and wholesomeness is wholeness, health, balance, harmony, coherence, order, integration, and unity on the individual, social, and cosmic levels. It can be established only through *tawheed*"[(2)].

There is a growing and pressing need to synthesize our understanding of life and the universe. Modern scientists and philosophers are now trying to unify the different laws of the universe under a T.O.E.; that is a *Theory of Everything.* Another contemporary call is the call to integrate the various states of human experience in one Grand Theory, a theory that will, scientists and philosophers say, end our long quest and

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(1) Wilson, Join (1864) *Unitarian Principles Confirmed by Trinitarian Testimonies: Being Selections from the Works of Eminent Theologians Belonging to Orthodox Churches*, Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, p. 368.

(2) Chittick, W. C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, (edit.), p. 18.

explain everything from A to Z[1]. This need may sound more pronounced today, but it has also been the dream of ancient generations to unite everything they knew and trace the diversities of existence back to a single source. Ken Wilber wrote:

"The Greeks had a beautiful word, *Kosmos*, which means the patterned whole of all existence, including the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realms. Ultimate reality was not merely the cosmos, or the physical dimension, but the Kosmos, or the physical and emotional and mental and spiritual dimensions altogether. Not just matter lifeless and insentient, but the living totality of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit"[2].

The fundamental feature characterizing Islamic thought is comprehensiveness and synergy, a feature which modern learning and secular thinking seriously lack. The difference between these two modes of thinking is best explained in the words of William C. Chittick:

"There is a fundamental difference between the Islamic intellectual tradition and modern learning. One way to understand this is to see that Muslim intellectuals were striving to achieve a unitary and unified vision of all things by actualizing the transpersonal intellect, the divine spirit latent in the human soul. In contrast, modern scientists want to achieve an ever more exact and precise understanding of things, one that allows for increased control over the environment, the human body, and society. To the extent that this control is achieved, however, it is given over to the ignorant and

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[1] Two books discussing the prospects of this theory are: Barrow, John. D. (2005) *Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation*, Vintage Books & Wilber, Ken (2001) *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Gateway.

[2] Wilber, Ken (2001) *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Gateway, p. 11.

forgetful selfhood – what was called –caprice" (*hawa*) or –appetite" (*shahwa*) in the texts"[1].

Today, almost all cosmologists endorse the Big-Bang theory as the most plausible explanation for the beginning of the universe. The theory states that the universe originated from a singularity, after which it expanded with time exponentially. Similarly, biologists say that the complexities characterizing forms of life appear to have evolved from simpler units akin to what has come to be known as 'irreducible complexity', the simplest unit of complexity organisms can be reduced to. The tendency to attain unity and simplicity in our understanding of life is almost natural and the more we explore nature the more certain we become about the validity of our aspiration. J. Royce wrote:

"The aim of the whole process seems to be to reach as complete and united a conception of reality as possible, a conception wherein the greatest fullness of data shall be combined with the greatest simplicity of conception. The effort of consciousness seems to be to combine the greatest richness of content with the greatest definiteness of organization"[2].

Our religious experience is no exception to the principle of unity and simplicity. Across the ages, human beings have deviated from belief in the One God to belief in various gods; from the purity of monotheism to the muddle of polytheism and henotheism (belief in the One God in addition to minor gods). This triggered the diffusion of myth, superstition, and pseudo religion. When modern man appeared many centuries later, and saw this huge mess, he either abandoned religion or

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[1] Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, (edit.), p. 55.

[2] J. Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, quoted in: Williams, James (1889) *The Psychology of Belief*, *Mind*, Vol. 14, No. 55. (Jul.), p. 350.

joined the false heritage only to spoil the scene and add more confusion. William C. Chittick analyzes the modern crisis:

"Modern times and modern thought lack a single center, a single orientation, a single goal, any single purpose at all. In other words, there is no single ~~–~~god." A god is what gives meaning and orientation to life, and the modern world derives meaning from many, many gods. Through an ever-intensifying process of *takthir*] meaning to multiply or make many[, the gods have been multiplied beyond count, and people worship whatever gods appeal to them"[(1)].

[(1)] William C. Chittick (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oxford, p. 12-13.

EXPLAINING WORSHIP

What is Worship?

Is it to lead a rabbinic and monastic life? Is it prolonged solitary meditation? Is it to lock oneself inside a mosque, church, synagogue, or temple and destine ourselves to seclusion and prayer for the rest of our lives? The conventional meaning of worship has become abominated or even extinct in many contemporary societies. The definition of worship is an endless spectrum of connotations if we intend to tackle all possible theological views. Nonetheless, all theological views cannot, at the same time, represent irrefutable truth even if we are to tolerate this under the arbitrary latitude of ideological liberty.

The definition of worship in Islam encompasses many things. Based on abundant evidence in the Quran and Sunnah, the Islamic scholar Ibn-Taimiyyah provides a definition approved by the majority of Muslims. He defines worship as **–~~a~~ comprehensive term standing for all the inward (implicit) or outward (explicit) deeds admired by Allah**"[1].

In this definition, inward deeds would include major beliefs such as believing in the Oneness of Allah, His Names and Attributes, and His worthiness of worship. Inward deeds also include knowledge such as knowing about Allah's Names and Attributes, and emotional states such as love of good and justice and hatred of oppression and evil. Outward deeds, on the other hand, include such deeds as articulating the testimony of faith, performing prayer, fasting, paying the alms due and pilgrimage. They also include seeking and spreading useful knowledge, offering help, and behaving kindly to parents, relatives, and all people. In Islam, all of these are considered forms of worship but only on one condition: that one intends them as acts of worship, performed in obedience to Allah alone. In this regard, Abul A'la Mawdudi wrote:

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[1] Ibn-Taimiyyah, A. *Resalatal-Uboodiah*, K.S.A., p. 38.

"] the duty of a Muslim [is to be always obedient to his Master, to carry out all his orders meticulously and to refrain from following his own desires or opinions or following anybody else contrary to his Master's wishes"[1].

Hence, the concept of worship in Islam radically differs from that found in all other religions. It is such a comprehensive concept that even one‘s smile and cheerfulness can become an act of worship. In short, all acts of benevolence, with the proper intention, become acts of worship. The Prophet said:

–Never belittle any good deed even if you were to meet your brethren with a cheerful face”[2].

–Smiling when meeting your brethren is an expression of charity, as are enjoining good and preventing evil, guiding the one who has lost his way, removing stones, thorns, and bones from people‘s paths, and pouring water from your bucket into the bucket of your brethren”[3].

This stands in stark contrast to the idea that action is subordinate to faith. In Islam, faith and action are interconnected. They complement and reinforce each other. Faith is not enough; it must be acted upon consistently. Practical worship is an endorsement of one's belief and serves to distinguish those who are committed from those who are merely content with paying lip-service[4].

"Do people think that they will be left alone saying, "We believe" without being tested? Verily, We have tested those before them and Allah will certainly know those who are truthful and those who are liars"[1].

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[1] Mawdudi, A. (1985) *Let us be Muslims*, p. 136.
[2] *Tirmithi*, No. 1833.
[3] *Tirmithi*, No. 1956.
[4] Al-Zarqa, M. Ahmed (1980) *Worship in Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, UK, p, 10.
[1] Quran: 29: 2-3.

"A fundamental error of Buddha", says John S. Blackie "consists in his placing human excellence in meditation rather than in action. The hero with him is always a saint, never a king. This is a subordination contrary to the great fact of the universe. The world is a work; life is a work; growth is a work; all things are full of labour, and attain to their perfection only by labour"[(1)].

The Quran combines faith (*iman*) and good works (*a'maal Salihah*) in many verses. To ensure the continuity of a robust Muslim community, faith, good works, and positive social interaction should work in tandem:

> "By Time, verily, mankind is in loss. Except for those who have faith and do good works, encourage one another to follow truth, and encourage one another to observe patience"[(2)].

Armstrong recapitulates:

"In the Quran, faith (*Iman*) is]not only the belief in one's heart but also[something that people do: they share their wealth, perform the "works of justice]and goodness[" (*Salihat*), and prostrate their bodies to the ground in the kenotic, ego-deflating act of prayer (*Salat*)"[(3)].

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(1) Blackie, John S. (1878) *The Natural History of Atheism*, New York, (edit.) p. 164.
(2) Quran: 103.
(3) Armstrong, Karen (2009) *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means*, p. 101-102 (calrificatory phrases in brackets are mine).

Three Levels of Worship

It is important to understand what the three levels of worship in Islam mean. Respectively, these levels are:

Level 1: Islam.
Level 2: Faith.
Level 3: Perfection.

Perfection, which will be explained later, is the most meritorious level and it cannot be attained before fulfilling the requirements of Islam and faith. The Hadith below explains the meaning of the first level: Islam.

Level One: Islam

The Prophet Mohammad said, "Islam is based on five (pillars):

(1) The *Shahadah* (testimony) that there is no true god except Allah, and that Mohammad is His Messenger.
(2) Performing *Salah* (prayer);
(3) Giving out *Zakah* (incumbent charity);
(4) Performing *Hajj* (pilgrimage); and,
(5) *Siyam* (fasting) of Ramadan"[1].

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[1] *Muslim*, No.113.

[1] The Testimony: A Firm Stronghold:

The first of the five pillars is the testimony or *Shahadah*, the key to Islam. It is composed of two segments. The first segment is to testify that Allah alone is the only God worthy of worship. The second one is to testify that Mohammad is His Messenger. The first segment of the *Shahadah* is both an affirmation of *tawheed* and a rejection of its antithesis, *shirk*. Concerning this segment, Wilfred C. Smith wrote:

"To worship God alone is to turn aside from false gods not only in the concrete sense of idols and religious polytheism, but also in the subtler sense of turning aside from a moral polytheism, from false values, the false gods of the heart. To pursue merely earthly goals, to value them, to give them one's allegiance and in a sense to worship them, goals such as wealth, prestige, sex, national aggrandizement, comfort, or all the other distractions and foibles of human life this, says the sensitive Muslim conscience…is to infringe the principle of monotheism"[(1)].

Cantwell insightfully explores a deeper level of *tawheed*:

"At a subtler level, for those capable of seeing it, the doctrine has meant also at times, and certainly ought to mean, a rejection of human tyranny. God alone is to be worshipped, to be served. For the man for whom this faith is sufficiently vivid, this can mean that no earthly power, no human figure, deserves or can legitimately claim man's allegiance; and any attempt to impose a purely human yoke on man's neck is an infringement not only of human dignity but of cosmic order, and to submit to it would be sin"[(2)].

Karen Armstrong, a scholar who has long admired Cantwell's writings, recapitulates:

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(1) Smith, Wilfred C. (1963) *The Faith of Other Men*, The New American Library, p. 62.
(2) *Ibid*. p. 60.

"The declaration of faith: "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet."...is not a "creed" in the modern Western sense; the Muslim who makes this *Shahadah* "bears witness" in his life and in every single one of his actions that his chief priority is Allah and that no other "gods"- which include political, material, economic, and personal ambitions- can take precedence over his commitment to God alone"[(1)].

In 1909, Charles W. Eliot predicted that in the 'religion of the future' there will be "no worship, expressed or implied, of dead ancestors, teachers, or rulers; more tribal, racial, or tutelary gods; no identification of any human being, however majestic in character, with the Eternal Deity"[(2)]. What else could this future religion be other than the religion of Islam?

The second segment of the *Shahadah* accentuates belief in Mohammad as the final Messenger. Belief in Mohammad‘s prophethood necessitates the fulfillment of four requisites: believing him in what he said, obeying him in what he ordered, refraining from what he prohibited, and worshipping Allah in the manner he approved. Submitting to Allah and fulfilling the four requisites above constitute the firm stronghold mentioned in the Quran:

> "Whoever submits himself to Allah, and is a good-doer, has indeed tightly held unto the most trustworthy stronghold: and with Allah rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs"[(3)].

The long era between the life of Jesus and the advent of Mohammad had witnessed a degeneration of religion. Man at that time kept trudging on the wastelands of ignorance, and

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(1) Armstrong, Karen (2009) *The Case for God*, p. 101.
(2) Eliot, Charles W. (1909) The Religion of the Future. *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (Oct.), p. 392, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Harvard Divinity School.
(3) Quran: 31: 22.

when he stood to see where he was he found himself in the middle of nowhere. Some people were living without Divine guidance, seeking refuge in superstitions. Some were living with divine guidance and revelation, but after it had been changed and adulterated. It was the propitious time for Islam to deliver people from sin and suffering and bring them back to the right path, to a belief in Allah, the God of Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, and Jesus.

When the Prophet Mohammad introduced monotheism to the pagans of Arabia, they ran away and stuck their fingers in their ears. They were so blinded by their polytheistic faith that any mention of the "One God" was labelled as a mere lie:

> "And the unbelievers say: "This is a sorcerer telling lies! Has he made the gods into One God? Truly this is a very weird thing!"[1].

Their polytheism consisted of worshipping sub-divinities or minor gods which they believed functioned as intermediaries between men and Allah. Their justification, which was cogently refuted by the Quran, was that an intermediary was necessary to intercede with Allah on their behalf; otherwise their worship would not be answered. Belief in godlike intermediaries still persists in many faiths around the world. In the sight of Allah, they are nothing but invented names:

> "(In reality) you worship nothing but names which you and your fathers have coined"[2].

The false gods are completely powerless and have nothing to offer:

> "Yet have they taken, beside Him, gods which create nothing but are themselves created; that have no

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[1] Quran: 38: 3-5.
[2] Quran : 12: 39.

authority to cause harm or bring benefit to themselves, nor do they have authority to cause death, life or resurrection!"[1]

In one Quranic parable, Allah likens the polytheist to a slave trying to serve many masters at the same time. Confused as to which master should be served first, the slave feels exasperated and torn apart:

"Allah puts forth a parable: a slave belonging to many partners disputing with one another, and a salve entirely belonging to one master. Are those two equal in comparison? All praise be to Allah! But most of them know not"[2].

Lastly, a key Islamic concept is that of *Fitrah*, the belief that humans are born with a pristine inclination towards belief in the One Creator. Karen Armstrong, in her monumental work *A History of God*, alludes to the nature of the experience:

"When people try to find an ultimate meaning and value in human life, their minds seem to go in a certain direction. They have not been coerced to do this; it is something that seems natural to humanity"[3].

From the Islamic viewpoint, every person is born in a state of Islam as long as his or her *Fitrah* remains intact. ~~—~~This message that all men are born Muslims", says Gary D. Guthrie "has in part accounted for Islam's widespread acceptance and popularity"[4]. "If we employ the language of the Quran", adds Chittick "the *Fitra* is the very self of Adam to whom God ~~—~~*taught all the names*" (Quran: 2:31). It is the primordial Adam present in every human being. At root, it is good and wise, because it inclines naturally toward *tawheed*, which

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[1] Quran: 25: 3.
[2] Quran : 39:29.
[3] Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 462.
[4] Guthrie, Gary D. (1997) *The Wisdom Tree: A Journey to the Heart of God*, Ocean Tree Books, p. 116.

stands at the heart of all wisdom and forms the basis for the acquisition of true knowledge of God, the universe, and the self"[1]. So *Fitrah* is not only experiencing a need to believe in God but also a need to be good.

Because people live in different contexts, some contexts may preserve *Fitrah* while some others may pervert it in various ways. People later on deviate to become Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists…depending on the environment that nurtures them. Normally, children espouse the religions dominant in their societies. They first inherit their faith from the most intimate persons: parents and relatives. Then there is the role of society which also includes influential agents such as neighbors, friends, education[2], and culture.

Condorcet Marquis, the French philosopher and mathematician, observed that ―human beings were basically good but had been corrupted by society"[3]. From the Islamic viewpoint this is true and the Prophet illustrates this in a vivid simile:

―Every infant is born in a state of 'Fitrah', but his parents either make him a Christian, a Jew, or a Magian, like animals when they procreate animals, do you ever see a maimed one among the procreated?"[4]

The simile above is self-explanatory. It establishes that natural states remain natural until external factors change their genuine character. When we think of people this way, we can imagine them born in a state of *Fitrah*, before being "maimed'

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(1) Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 29.

(2) "The function of the school", explains Ruth A. Wallace "is to transmit to the child the traditional beliefs and sentiments of both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which the child is destined". (Wallace, Ruth A. (1973) The Secular Ethic and The Spirit of Patriotism Author. *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (Spring), p. 4.

(3) Vault, Birdsall S. (1990) *Western Civilization Since 1600*. McGraw-Hill's College Review Books, p.69.

(4) *Bukhari*, No.1359.

by the choppers of the society. Centuries after Mohammad came Bertrand Russell, only to corroborate the Prophet's statement:

—With very view exceptions, the religion which man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of the environment is what has led him to accept the religion in question"[1].

When people imbibe the ways of their forefathers and for many years remain under constant indoctrination, they become very rigid and the likelihood of reversion to the *Fitrah* becomes increasingly remote. When Allah asked the disbelievers to break with their past and accept the truth, they refused and stuck to their deep-rooted habits:

> "When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah has revealed; come to the Messenger", they say: "What we found our fathers following is enough for us!" Will such be the case even if their fathers were lacking in knowledge and resistant to guidance?"[2].

[2] Salah: A Source of Happiness and Fortitude:

The second pillar is prayer, the continual reminder and daily connection between man and his Creator. Five prayers are offered at five times: before sunrise, between mid-day and afternoon, in the afternoon, immediately after sunset and between the time when the twilight is over and just before dawn.

> "O you who believe! Seek help in patience and Salah (prayer), truly, Allah is with those who are patient"[3].

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[1] Russell, Bertrand (2004) *Why Am I Not a Christian? And other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects.* Routledge Classics, London & New York, p. 22.
[2] Quran 5: 104.
[3] Quran: 2: 153.

Certain rules and conditions are to be observed before and during prayer. Prior to performing prayer, the person must be in a state of physical purity conferred by *Wudhu,* or ablution[1]. When a Muslim intends to perform *Wudhu*, he or she should wash the hands, face, arms to the elbows, wipe the head, rub inside and out both ears, and wash the feet to the ankles. Males should congregationally offer prayer in the Mosque whenever possible. Females who wish to perform prayer in the mosque should be allowed; yet it is sometimes preferable that women perform their prayers at home, especially in case of possible outdoor harassment.

Muslims gather in straight and even lines just as if one structure. They set themselves free from the vicissitudes of mortal life and rejoice in meditation. Such meditation is continually energized with recitations from the Quran, wherein there is hope for the broken-hearted, glad tidings for the despondent and informative lessons for the knowledge seeker.

> "And We send down from the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy for those who believe"[2].

> "Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular prayer: for prayer restrains from shameful and sinful deeds"[3].

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[1] Murad, M. (undated) *This Message Is For You*, Cooperative Office, Riyadh, p. 47.
[2] Quran: 17: 82.
[3] Quran: 29: 45.

[3] Zakah: A Social Benefactor:

The third pillar is *Zakah*: an amount of wealth given to those in need. Millions of people in the world are suffering from starvation and poverty despite continuous international efforts to offer food, medicine and shelter. In one of the direst statistics released by the United Nations Organization, over 730 million people suffer from starvation.

Islamic law solves this problem in two steps. Firstly, it proscribes monopoly of resources and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich; secondly, enforcing social justice and one way of achieving it is through fair distribution of existing affluence among the members of society.

> "So that it (wealth) does not become a thing to circulate only among the rich of you"[1].

Everything in the universe, including man himself, belongs to Allah for He is the absolute Owner (*Al-Malik*). The wealthy individual may be a proprietor - Islam has established the right to ownership, centuries before capitalism did - but it is not for him to deprive others from the abundant provisions of Allah or privilege a particular group and leave others in desperate need. One of the main goals of *Zakah* is the elimination of favoritism. By exacting a specified annual amount from the substance[2] of the well-to-do and distributing it among those in need, *Zakah* accomplishes two goals: the prevention of avaricious moods/modes and the promotion of social well-being.

Concerning the former goal, *Zakah* is an opportunity to cleanse the Muslim from the blemishes of iniquity and the

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[1] Quran: 59:7.

[2] *Zakah* is levied on certain types of food, grain, cattle, and cash retained for one lunar year. (*This Message is For You*, Mahmoud Murad, p. 53, Cooperative Office, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

traits of miserliness and penuriousness[1]. As for the second goal, *Zakah* facilitates the reduction of existing prodigality and maximized utilization of occurring affluence, hence contributing significantly to salvaging the economy from eventualities of slump, inflation, and nationwide bankruptcy[2].

> "Take charity from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them therewith..."[3]

The basic idea of *Zakah* at large is not new in the world of religion and it is morally encouraged in almost all societies. Even in the secular sphere of systematic welfare, *Zakah* is not an unprecedented breakthrough. Generally speaking, it's quite similar to the idea of noblesse oblige[4]. Yet, *Zakah* differs significantly in three major respects. Firstly, it draws its wisdom from divine revelation; secondly, it's compulsory, for it is a pillar of the religion; thirdly, its overall benefit is diverse and far-reaching[5].

Let me seize this opportunity to talk a little about an Islamic economy. Start with the big picture, an Islamic economic system seeks the middle way between Socialist autocracy and the spoiling liberalism of Capitalism (Adam

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(1) Strauch, S. (2002) *Islamic Insights*, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 35.

(2) Michael Parenti discloses some of the negative repercussions of capitalistic economy: "Vast amounts of money are stolen from the American public by big business through insufficient wages, price-fixing, crooked financing, inflated insurances, deceptive sales, and other shadowy practices". (*America Besieged*, Michael Parenti, City Lights Books, p. 41, 1998)

(3) Quran: 9: 103.

(4) (From French): "the idea that people who have special advantages of wealth, etc. should help other people who do not have these advantages" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Sixth Edition, Oxford University Press 2000).

(5) In the Quran (9: 60), the beneficiaries of *Zakah* comprise eight categories: the poor, the needy, the administrators (distributors) of *Zakah*, those inclined to Islam, the captives seeking freedom (for ransom), the debtors, the cause of Allah, and the wayfarers.

Smith believed "that individual greed and acquisitiveness were necessary prerequisites for the stimulation of the economy"[(1)]). It abolishes discriminatory measures and the causes of class struggle plaguing other societies. In Islam, there is no place for such thing as feudal aristocrats feeding on the gains of the bourgeois who, in turn, gobble up the basic rights of the poor proletariat. Islam also shuns capitalistic malpractices such as monopoly, unbearable interest rates (although all forms of interest (usury) are prohibited in Islam)[(2)], trafficking, and commercial opportunism. In his Political Ideology, Andrew Heywood wrote:

"Steering the middle course between capitalism and socialism, Islam upholds the institution of private property, prohibits usury or profiteering, exhorts the principles of social justice, charity, and cooperation"[(3)].

Centuries before Adam Smith introduced the ethics of capitalism in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, "the Koran, supplemented by *Hadith,* propounded measures that broke the barriers of economic caste and enormously reduced the injustices of special interest groups", observed Huston Smith who also concludes:

"The model that animates Muslim economics is the body‘s circulatory system. Health requires that blood flow freely and vigorously; sluggishness can bring on illness, blood clots occasion death. It is not different with the body politic, in

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(1) Hilton, Matthew (2004) The Legacy of Luxury: Moralities of Consumption Since the 18th Century, *Journal of Consumer Culture*; 4; p. 102.

(2) The Quran and the Sunnah strictly prohibit *riba* (interest). In a society where interest is widespread, wealth migrates from the poor to the rich. The increase in interest bonus is gained at the expense of the borrower, who continually sustains unfair increase every time he defaults on repayment.

(3) Heywood, A. (2003) *Political Ideology*, Palgrave, (edit.) p. 142, 306.

which wealth takes the place of blood as the life-giving substance"[1].

In Islam, the members of society are treated on an equal footing by benefiting from an interest-free loan system. The rationale is based on the Islamic principle that no one is allowed to benefit at the expense of another; in other words, economic motives should always be triggered by a win-win policy.

[4] Siyam: Curbing Desire:

The fourth pillar is fasting the lunar month of *Ramadan*. Children, nursing mothers, menstruating women, travellers, the insane, and the sick are exempt from fasting. In this month, an adult Muslim must to abstain from drinking, eating and having sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset. Yet the primary moral of fasting is to refrain from evil acts, words, thoughts and to increase praiseworthy deeds such as charity, kindness, generosity, patience and forgiveness. Performed in obedience to Allah, fasting becomes a practical way of liberating the self from the shackles of desire. It teaches the person to be honest with himself and true to his beliefs[2].

Fasting is also an opportunity to spare a thought for the deprived and remind the self of Allah's favors which usually go unappreciated in times of well-being. When Muslims worldwide observe fasting, they annually set a common purpose which acts to rejuvenate timeworn relations. From a health standpoint, the individual can transform his diet into a less taxing one for his digestive system.(3) By fasting, Muslims learn how to struggle against the forces of evil in

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(1) Smith, Huston (2001) *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, HarperCollins, p. 59-60.
(2) Khouj, Abdullah (1994) *Islam: Its Meaning, Objectives, and Legislative System*, p.31.
(3) *Ibid*. p.31.

their own selves, in the society around them, and in the world at large. To summarize all the moral and spiritual gifts of Ramadan, one can say that Ramadan grants the gift of Taqwa. Taqwa is the final resultant of worship, the highest of all virtues in the Islamic scheme of things. It means, God-consciousness, piety, fear and awe of Allah; signifying submission to Allah and sincere commitment to all that is good and rejection of all that is evil[1].

> "O you who believe! Fasting has been decreed on you as it was decreed on those before you so that you may attain Taqwa"[2].

[5] Hajj: A Universal Meeting:

The fifth pillar of Islam is *Hajj* (pilgrimage) to the land of Makkah once in a lifetime. Hajj implies a journey to the Creator. On this occasion, Muslims from around the world stand humbly before the Creator, asking forgiveness, and calling for His infinite mercy. When all pilgrims have a common cause with one another through the unity of rites and sites, they are made to experience a genuine state of egalitarianism[3], free from ~~e~~cultural chauvinism, racism, and "the drive to feel superior to and distant from the Muslims all around"[4].

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[1] Siddiqi, M. H., 'Fasting in Ramadan: Lessons & Moralities'. @ www.Islamonline/English/Ramadan/Heart_Softening/Reflections//12.shtml accessed: 6-8-2009.

[2] Quran: 2: 183.

[3] In this connection Toynbee wrote, "The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue". (A.J. Toynbee, *Civilization of Trial*, New York, 1948, p.205**).**

[4] Lang*,* Jeffrey (1997) *Even Angels Ask*, Amana publications, United States, p. 190.

In this universal meeting, Muslims temporarily suspend themselves from the usual worldly activities. Male pilgrims partially cover their bodies with white, plain shrouds. Males and females should stop all kinds of shaving, refrain from sexual intercourse, clipping their nails, putting on perfume, or changing the prescribed garments. This abstention from usual luxuries is symbolic of man's ~~re~~realization of himself as a naked soul in front of Allah alone"[1]. As the pilgrimage draws nearer to its close, exhilarative sensations become hardly concealable and pilgrims, keener than ever to head back home, depart the holy lands bearing one of their fondest memories.

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[1] Ahmed, K. (1988) *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, The Islamic Foundation, UK, p. 23.

Level Two: Faith

Now, we come to the second level of worship known as Faith (*Iman*). Faith has two meanings: a general one and a specific one. The general meaning pertains to belief and affirmation; that is the general act of believing in Allah's messages. The specific definition comprises six articles elaborated by the Prophet Mohammad as follows: "Faith is to believe in:

(1) Allah;
(2) His Angels;
(3) Fate, its good and bad repercussions"[1].
(4) The Last Day;
(5) His Messengers; and,
(6) His Books;

[1] Belief in Allah:

To believe in Allah is:

1- To believe that He is the only true Creator and Sustainer of everything that exists.

"Say (O Muhammad): "Who sustains you from the sky and the earth? Or who owns (the powers of) hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who disposes all affairs?" They will say: "Allah." Say: "Will you not then fear Him?" Such is Allah, your Lord in truth. So, apart from truth, what is it that remains except error? How then are you turned away?"[2].

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[1] *Muslim*, No.93.
[2] Quran: 10:31-32.

2- To believe that He is the only God worthy of all sincere worship.

> "...none has the right to be worshipped but He. Will you then submit to God?"[1]

3- To believe in Allah's Names and Attributes and understand them not according to human conjecture, but according to the knowledge revealed in the Quran and the Sunnah.

The components above have been addressed earlier in this book. However, the reader is advised to further consider three important conditions and they are as follows:

The First Condition

Belief in the existence of Allah necessitates belief in His transcendence (highness). This is articulated in many verses two of which can be quoted here:

> "And He is the Vanquisher, above His slaves..."[2].

The eighty-seventh chapter commences with:

> "Glorify the Name of your Rubb, the Most High"[3].

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[1] Quran: 12-14.
[2] Quran: 6:18.
[3] Quran: 87:1.

The Second Condition

Valid worship is that which is endorsed by the Prophet. One is required to worship Allah as taught by the Prophet. This condition aims at ruling out the possibility of dissent and undesirable disputes among Muslims concerning the manner and legitimacy of certain acts of worship. To innovate and then sanctify an act of worship is to ascribe to the Prophet something which he hadn't allowed. "Innovations are inherently suspect", explains Jonathan P. Berkey "because they represent a departure from the practice of the prophet Muhammad and his Companions"[1].

The Third Condition

Concerning belief in Allah‘s Names and Attributes, the reader should bear in mind two vital points:

a. Some of Allah‘s Attributes cannot be known through human reasoning. Reliable knowledge about the Attributes is only acquired through authentic revelation, a revelation that truly stands the test of time and meets the deep needs of all men. Only one book meets this challenge: the Quran. Failure to grasp details lying beyond our comprehension or details unnecessary for us to know should not shake our belief in Allah. For example, if people know the president of their country, does their knowledge of such necessarily diminish by being ignorant of the size of his feet, the color of his eyes, or the shape of his forehead?

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[1] Berkey, Jonathan P. (1993) *Traditional Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, Davidson College, p. 41.

b. In addition to knowledge through revelation, some knowledge of the Attributes can be learned through reflection; Attributes such as 'Will', 'Power', and Wisdom[1]. The vastness of the cosmos, the fine-tuned laws therein, and their purposeful functioning point to a willing, omnificent, and infinitely wise Creator. After all, the preponderance of evidence for design, hence a Designer is crystal-clear before the eyes of those who believe there's more to existence than meets the eye. In the end, to believe or disbelieve is a matter of personal choice, yet the consequences of either choice must follow. For those who believed, there is eternal bliss; for those who disbelieved there is eternal loss.

> "The losers are those who have lost themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, that is the manifest loss!"[2].

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[1] Al-Ashqar, Umar (2000) *Belief in Allah in the Light of the Quran and the Sunnah*. IIPH, p. 257.
[2] Quran: 39:15.

[2] Belief in Angels:

According to the Prophet, angles are a special class of creation born out of light[1]. While human beings enjoy free will, where it is at their discretion to believe or otherwise, angles do not. According to the Quran, angles are believers by nature, they are created to obey, and they never act of their own accord:

> "They never speak until He has spoken, and they act only according to His Command"[2].

From the Islamic perspective, angles are not surplus creations or fictional beings ornamenting human mythology. Belief in the angels follows from the Muslims' belief in the truth of the Quran and the trustworthiness of the Prophet. For one to deny the articles of faith, or for that matter any of Islam's basic tenets, one would first have to question the integrity of the Prophet or accuse earlier generations of either large-scale forgery, pure ignorance, or both. This means that an entire edifice would have to be dismantled and no prudent academician would want to put himself in such an unjustifiable position.

Like all things belonging to the category of the unseen, the truth about angles cannot be sought through mere human reason. From the Islamic perspective, human beings do not exist alone in this universe and they are surrounded by a class of unseen realities. Angles belong to this class and they perform roles which directly affect various human activities. From the many roles assigned to angles, the Quran mentions that they protect human beings[3]; accurately record human

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(1) *Muslim*, No. 7420.
(2) Quran: 21: 27.
(3) Quran: 82:10-12

deeds[1], both good and bad; run errands of mercy[2]; transmit Allah's revelations to His Prophets and Messengers[3], and effect occasional trials to test mankind[4].[5]

If we limit ourselves to science and distrust all extraphysical knowledge, it would be easy to reject the existence of angels or any other unseen reality. The rejection may gain credence from the argument that only observable phenomena warrant credibility. But if we try to apply this method on a wider range of unobservable realities we run into serious problems. Problems in the sciences, our understanding, and the way we utilize our research methods in exploring reality. Let us take as an example the behaviour of electrons in quantum mechanics. "Suppose an electron is put in a long box where it may travel back and forth", says physicist Charles Townes, Nobel-winning physicist and coinventor of the laser. "Physical theory now tells that, under certain conditions, the electron will be sometimes found towards one end of the box and sometimes towards the other, but never in the middle. This statement ***clashes absurdly*** with ideas of an electron moving back and forth and yet most physicists today are quite convinced of its validity"[6].

Today, scientists are grappling with the invisible intricacies of quantum mechanics and the possibility of extraterrestrial (intelligent) life in our galaxy[7]. They are psychologically

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[1] Quran: 50: 16-17.
[2] Quran: 79: 1-5.
[3] Quran: 2:97, 16:2.
[4] Quran: 2: 102.
[5] Dirks, Jerald F. (2001) *The Cross & The Crescent*, Amana publications, United States, p. 195.
[6] Townes, C. (2008) *The Convergence between Science and Religion*, Université Interdisciplinaire de Paris, p. 1.
[7] See: Carl Sagan, Norman Horowitz & Bruce Murray (1977) Continuing Puzzles about Mars. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 30, No. 7, p. 21-30; Oro, John (2002) Historical Understanding of Life's Beginning. In *Life's Origin: the Beginnings of Biological Evolution*, edited by J. William Schopf, University of California Press, p. 38 -39.

capable of believing in statements that 'clash absurdly', to borrow Charles Townes words, with common sense or daily experience and get along with them without qualms. What does this imply? It implies no less than a human desire to break away from the confinements of the lower world. It uncovers an aptitude for believing in more than what there is, in more than what is accessible to the senses[(1)]. This invites to mind a Hebrew line:

—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"[(2)].

To conclude this part, what we need in our understanding of faith is not fideism[(3)] but humility and the acknowledgement that ignorance is just as normal a trait of human beings as being knowledgeable. As the British particle physicist John Polkinghorne says, "If we do not display a certain degree of intellectual humility, misleading and untenable claims will be made. If we are not content to live with the acknowledgement that there are phenomena that are beyond our contemporary powers of explanation, we shall have a truncated and inadequate grasp of reality"[(4)].

Although we might not be able grasp the nature of supernatural realities, we still need to rely on reason to decide whether they lie beyond our ken or not. In other words, we

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(1) As Sander L. Koole and his colleagues (2010, p. 103) have recently pointed out, theories which view religion as a by-product of cognitive adaptations "overlook the broader significance of religion's defiance of logical thinking". "By transcending logic", assert Koole et al. "religion may lead people toward truths that are never fully understood yet deeply felt and experienced" (Koole, S. L. et al. (2010) Why Religion's Burdens Are Light: From Religiosity to Implicit Self-Regulation; *Personality and Social Psychology Review*; 14(1) 95 –107).

(2) Hebrews: 11:1.

(3) "A view that is pessimistic about the role of reason in achieving knowledge of things divine, and that emphasizes instead the merits of acts of faith". (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 139)

(4) Polkinghorne, John (2000) *Faith, Science and Understanding*, Yale University Press, p. 119.

cannot but rely on reason to make judgments about everything, including the supernatural/metaphysical. Whether such judgments are right or wrong is another thing and this is where revelation is supposed to intervene as the ultimate arbiter. As Michael S. Jones wrote, "Even when truth is revealed supernaturally, reason is required for human's to apprehend it"[(1)].

Many realities fall beyond comprehension

[(1)] Jones, M. S. (2002) In Defence of Reason in Religion. *Journal for the study of Religions and Ideologies*, spring: 1, p. 132.

[3] Belief in Fate:

Belief in fate is to believe in Allah's sovereignty over the universe. Nothing has occurred, occurs, or will ever occur outside Allah's infinite knowledge. Yet, this is sometimes wrongly equated with fatalism, the belief that freedom is an illusion, that people have no choice or command of themselves. Bill Baker corrects this misconception in his book *More in Common than You Think*. He wrote:

"Islam's emphasis on the sovereignty of God is often called fatalism which is incorrect. The sovereignty of God has nothing to do with "fate" or "chance". Acknowledging that God knows all things before they occur, and that the road which each man is destined to travel is already chartered and recorded by God, in no way precludes the moral responsibility of individual choice. God knows the choices we will make and our ultimate destiny, but we do not! Therefore, life is indeed a series of choices based upon our own free will. Whether it is called determinism, predestination, or Calvinism, man will choose his own avenue of life, and God will have laid the pavement for that road or avenue long before our birth"[(1)].

In his book *Shifa'ul 'aleel*, the Sunni scholar Ibnul-Qayim draws on evidence from the Quran and Sunnah to reconcile two extreme doctrines: determinism and free will. His view, which actually represents the view of Sunni Muslims, acknowledges Allah's omnipotence and the predestination of human beings' acts, but at the same time reveals that there is no evidence - neither in Islam nor in reality - for exempting human beings from being responsible for their actions. They can exercise their choices (Ikhtiyar), they have will (Iraadah), and enjoy a sufficient degree of autonomy to carry out (yaf'al) their decisions. He maintained that insistence on either

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[(1)] Baker, Bill (1998) *More in Common Than You Think*, Defenders Publications, p. 41.

extremity was baseless and argued that both views were contradictory only on the surface[1]. Basing his views on the Quran and Sunnah, Ibnul-Qayim agrees with his teacher Ibn-Taimiyyah that in order to understand the root of the problem one should distinguish between two kinds of divine will: Religious-Moral Will (Shari'yyah) and Will of Being (Iradah Koniyyah)[2]. We will come to these two notions later.

Again, the determinism-indeterminism binary is complementary and inseparable in the Sunni understanding of predestination. Ahmet T. Karamustafa briefly explains:

"The predestination theme appears in the form of an uncompromising emphasis on the supreme agency and omnipotence of God, but it is counterbalanced by an equally strong assumption of human responsibility for human action"[3].

The Sunni understanding falls between two vulnerable extremes: that of the Mu'tazilites, who vigorously reject determinism and assert absolute human independency[4], and that of the Ash'arites, who deny free will and dogmatize the tenet of *Kasb*[5], which in reality is a strand of determinism

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[1] Ibnul-Qayim (1999) Shifa'ul 'aleel, Obeikan, Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. Perho, Irmeli (2001) Man Chooses his Destiny: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Views on Predestination, Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Vol. 12, Issue 1 (Jan.), p. 61 – 70.

[2] Ibnu Taimiyyah (2002) *Al-Fataawaa*, Vol. 8, Saudi Arabia, Riyadh.

[3] Karamustafa, Ahmet T. (2002) Fate. In: *Encyclopedia of the Quran*, Vol. 2, p.185. Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe et al., Brill, Leiden–Boston–Kolon,

[4] The Mu'tazilites' view is akin to that upheld by contemporary Libertarianism, a school of free will philosophy. Libertarians say that "we have free will if our actions are determined by us and by us only". Another school of free will is that of the Compatibilists, who maintain that we have free will only if "we are unaware of any outside compulsion constraining our actions" (Tipler, Frank J. (1994) *The Physics of Immortality*, Anchor Books, p. 186).

[5] Roughly meaning: 'acquisition', the act of acquiring an act or deed. Ash'arites believed that the real creator of opportunities was Allah and that humans only snatch such opportunities at the moment of intending to do so. On the face of it, their postulation may sound convincing but,

covered by a veneer of freedom. In contrast to both schools, Sunni scholars strove to combine reality and religion, reconciling – similar to what the German philosopher Gottfried Herder many centuries later encouraged[1] - the dictates of common sense with the statements of the Quran and Sunnah.

Before I expand on the topic of fate, perhaps it would be worthwhile if we acquainted ourselves with man's relationship with the universe. Human beings exist in a universe which operates according to a system of laws. They may involve laws governing the larger scale of existence, such as Einstein's general relativity, the smaller scale, such as quantum mechanics and other subatomic mechanisms, or evolutionary laws from morphology (i.e. configuration of organisms) to genetic and sub-genetic processes. In the end, the common feature of all laws is that they must comprise a system of some kind. Ecologically, we are part of a complicated system and therefore physiologically as well as psychologically influenced by myriad forces. Various schools of thought have vied to explain the nature of this interaction between humans and the system they happen to exist in. Is this relation a deterministic one[2], hence justifying the position of fatalists or indeterministic, hence the exclusion of divine intervention and the rationalization of randomness in the cosmos and human activity?

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when thoroughly examined, it views humans as incapable of exercising true free will (which, according to Sunni scholars, is ultimately granted by Allah as a favour).

[1] Gottfried asserted that "we should pay some regard to common sense, but should not pay regard to it alone. To disregard it, is sophistry; to neglect everything else, leads to fanaticism" (Erdmann, Johann E. (1890) *History of Philosophy*, New York, Vol. 2, p. 281).

[2] Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1826) believed in a deterministic universe. He maintained that all events originate from a precise combination of cause and effect and, as consequence, all events are predictable. His work was influenced by Isaac Newton's mechanical physics, which was later superseded by relativity and quantum physics.

Here, I will not talk about large systems, be they physical or biological, because systems apparent to the naked eye generally exhibit a large degree of uniformity and predictability, for example the movement of celestial objects (Newtonian physics). Rather, I will briefly address the issue of small scale systems; first, because many of the recent debates on indeterminism have developed from that area. Second, because we need to understand the nature of the relationship between (in)determinism and human action.

What is usually perceived as random biological/ subatomic processes or chaotic quantum mechanisms is something we deduce via indirect observation. In other words, randomness and chaos are not laws, but rather the by-products of **the *nonlinear* – as opposed to linear - nature of laws operating at the microcosmic level**. By and large, laws appear predictable at the macrocosmic level yet become increasingly unpredictable the more we delve into that level of physical existence. To the human observer, the laws are both predictable (deterministic) and unpredictable (indeterministic). From the Islamic perspective, this is an extremely important statement for two primary reasons:

1. In a purely deterministic universe everything would be purely perfect. Here, I mean perfect in the sense of certainty, consistency, and totally free from chaos real and apparent. It follows that in a universe whose laws and properties are purely perfect, human beings would find it difficult to distinguish the Creator from the created. As John F. Haught points out:

"If the natural world were perfectly directed or designed in every detail, after all, it could never become distinct from its creator"[(1)].

2. Our world should be the way it is so that *Masayib* (intermittent afflictions befalling human life) and *Fitan*

[(1)] Haught, John F. (2006) *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science*, CUP, p. 72.

(occasional trials) can happen. *Masayib* and *Fitan* cannot transpire in a setting where the laws of everything are mechanically deterministic, predictable and precisely foreknown. Had such been the case, we would have avoided all evil and secured for ourselves anything we desired, as stated in the Quran:

> "If I had known Ghaib (the unseen, future), I would have secured for myself abundant good, and no evil could have touched me"[(1)].

For suffering and struggle to take place, for opportunities to be encountered, for choice to take effect, and for free will to be exercised, man has to exist in a world characterized by some degree of uncertainty, relativity, and unpredictability; a world where there is room for stake, suspense, surprise, and mystery. As Maragret Wheately puts it," we are being called to encounter life as it is: uncontrollable, unpredictable, messy, surprising, erratic"[(2)]. Stephen Hawking, the British physicist, realized that free will is feasible where there is choice and choice is feasible where there is unpredictability. He wrote:

"So as we cannot predict human behavior, we may as well adopt the effective theory that humans are free agents who can choose what to do"[(3)].

From another perspective, existing in a *partially* indeterministic universe has a direct impact on human behaviour. It practically explains why humans are imperfect beings, habitually running into problems, committing mistakes, and falling into all sorts of blunders. John C. Lucas (1961), in his *Minds, Machines, and Gödel*, was surely mistaken when he asserted that humans were 'perfectly'

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(1) Quran: 7: 188.

(2) Wheatley, Margaret J. (2007) *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, p. 125

(3) Hawking, Stephen (1994) *Black Holes, Baby Universes, and other Essays*, Bantam Books, p. 126.

consistent actors. This extremely idealistic view was later counterpoised by Daniel Dennett's criticism that the "demand for absolute perfection and invulnerability frequently leads philosophical theory builders to ascribe magical (that is, impossible) properties to human agents"[1]. Furthermore, the assumption that humans are perfectly consistent actors does not fit with Allah's plan, which already contains elements of chance and unpredictability. In other words, perfectly consistent actors may only exist in perfectly deterministic universes.

In the light of evidence from the Quran and Sunnah, one can infer two kinds of deterministic laws:

1. Laws that lie beyond human will; and

2. Laws that are effected by or follow from human will.

Deterministic laws which lie beyond human will are those which human beings cannot choose to cause, alter, or change. These include celestial movements, evolution of stars, expansion of the universe, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and all other natural phenomena. Even many of our biological and hereditary properties are governed by laws that fall beyond the scope of human choice. There is no question about the deterministic nature of such laws and when I say 'deterministic' I mean that human beings are completely inert with regards to influencing the function of such laws. In this deterministic system, human beings are nonetheless conscious of themselves as cogs in a huge machine. Here, human choice is subject to the dictates of *Iradah Koniyyah*, Cosmic Will or Allah's Will of Being, meaning that it must be or has to happen regardless of human choice.

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[1] Dennett, Daniel C. (1984) *Elbow room: the Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*, Clarendon Press, London, p. 29.

"No calamity befalls on the earth or afflicts you in yourselves but is inscribed in the Book of Decrees before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah"[1].

Here, we are asked to endure and be patient:

"Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere; who say, when afflicted with calamity, "To Allah we belong and to Him is our return"[2].

It is worth emphasizing that Sunni Muslims have succeeded in developing an informative conceptualization of reality[3]. To the Sunni Muslim, evil is acknowledged as a fact of life, but whenever possible, to overcome it is a sign of wisdom and robust faith. William M. Watt, in his *Suffering in Sunnite Islam*, acknowledges:

"Nevertheless the most devout among them (Sunnite Muslims) triumphed over the suffering that came to them, and found in it not frustration but fulfilment. It is indeed one of the great achievements of Sunnite Islam that it enabled countless

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[1] Quran: 57: 22.
[2] Quran: 2: 155-156.
[3] As opposed to Shiite Islam, in which history is viewed as a hapless and ill-fated experience. Shiites are a sect that broke away from Sunnite Islam several years after the Prophet's death and developed their own esoteric piety which unwarrantedly depended on a symbolic understanding of the Quran. Occultation is a pivotal creed in Shiite Islam. Shiites believe in the doctrine of 'hidden Imams' (religious leaders), who in turn were believed by some to be "incarnations of the divine", relates Karen Armstrong in her *A History of God*. This latter belief stands in diametric opposition to the Quran's uncompromising emphasis on pure monotheism and the transcendence of Allah. Practically speaking, instead of the Prophet, the central figures in Shiite Islam are Ali, the cousin of the Prophet, and the successive Imams. Historically, Shiite Islam is better regarded as an offshoot of political strife (Armstrong, Karen (1999) *A History of God*, Vintage, p. 199).

men and women to lead tolerable lives in conditions of incredible hardship"[1].

The second kind of deterministic laws are those which are caused by or follow from human choice. This is a bit subtle and requires special attention. Intention, the locus of human will, is a highly conscious activity and the more conscious we are about our choices the freer we are likely to be. To be conscious is to necessarily feel that one is in full command of his choices. When we attempt to transform such choices into actions, we trigger a series of events in order to actualize what we have intended. Our intentions prime our biology and psychology to behave in a certain way in order to achieve a desired state. On the other hand, the less conscious we become the more likely our choices will be at the mercy of (undesirable) subconscious processes. The vital role of intention has been laconically elucidated by the Prophet:

"**Actions are but by intentions**, and everyone will get only what he has intended"[2].

If we intend good, Allah will pave our way towards achieving it:

> "As for him who gives out (charity), fears (Allah), and believes in the best reward; then surely We will make easy for him the path of goodness"[3].

But if we intend evil, an undesirable destiny is made possible:

> "But he who is greedy, deems himself self-sufficient, and disbelieves in the best reward, then surely We will make easy for him the path of evil"[4].

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[1] Watt, W. Montgomery (1979) Suffering in Sunnite Islam. *Studia Islamica*, No. 50, p.19.
[2] *Muslim*, No. 4904.
[3] Quran: 92: 5-7.
[4] Quran: 92: 8-9.

In Islam, intention and the works of the heart (*A'maalul Qulub*) play an indispensable role in determining our destiny and shaping the future of our lives. In one verse, "*Allah will not change a people's condition until they change what is inside themselves*"[1]. In another verse, *"whosoever believes in Allah, He (Allah) will guide his heart*"[2]. However, human will has its limits. With free will, we can neither remain young nor avoid old age. Yet with free will nothing prevents us, when it comes to intention, from being honest and goodhearted. Nothing prevents us except our intention to become otherwise. This closely pertains to the notion of *Iradah Shari'yyah*, roughly translated: Religious/Moral Will.

It is primarily within this range of choice that humans enjoy and exercise full freedom, are fully responsible, and held accountable for their actions. You and I don't have to change the course of history or bring everlasting peace to all humanity; conversely, we have every reason to deal honestly with the people we know, to learn good things, and cleanse our hearts of evil. It is in this same vein that J. G. Clapp wrote:

"In the fullest sense the term, "freedom" seems reserved to indicate choice which is *deliberate desire of things in our power*, and particularly where there is excellence in this deliberation. It is in this sense that we mean that the man of practical wisdom is most truly free"[3].

Concerning the need to consider the limits of free will and therefore distinguish between the doable and undoable, Clapp also noted:

"A closely related point arises in connection with the distinction between the possible and impossible. We can have

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[1] Quran: 13:11.
[2] Quran: 64: 11.
[3] J. G. Clapp (1943) On Freedom, *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Feb. 18), p. 100.

no choice with respect to the impossible, for it sets the absolute limits of freedom"[1].

In the field of self-development and change management, experts tell their clients about the 'need to change', thus underscoring the importance of personal choice in achieving success. Veterans in the field have emphasized the remarkable effect of powerful imagery which humans creatively utilize to sustain their motivation.

I myself conducted a study on the effect of the ability to visualize one's self at some time in the future. The concept of possible selves is one that has been thoroughly developed by psychologist Hazel Markus[2]. I decided to borrow this intriguing notion and apply to the field of psycholinguistics (the psychology of language learning). The study's aim was to investigate the relationship between one's ability to visually imagine his or her self as a (successful) language learner and the likelihood of increased motivational behavior. Interestingly, the correlations turned out significantly high, even higher than expected. Individuals who were able to visualize more vivid and detailed possible selves (of themselves as successful language learners) were more likely to exhibit increased motivational behavior[3].

I think these results have important implications for life and not only language learning. A large portion of our lives is determined by what we would like to become and that we really have adequate freedom to account for our responsibility in becoming that very person we imagine. In short, our freedom is not always crushed or shushed by deterministic

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(1) *Ibid*. p. 87.

(2) Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986) Possible Selves, *American Psychologist*, 41, 954-969.

(3) Al-Shehri, A. (2009) Motivation and Vision: The Realtion between the Ideal L2Self, Imagination, and Visual Style. In *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self,* edited by Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E., Canada, Multilinguial Matters.

social forces – the preferred scapegoat for many lazy and dependent people - as some social scientists would like us to believe. Quite the opposite, humans possess a genuine agency to create the world they live in. Whilst we cannot deny the impact or existence of social powers, we must not undermine the agency of individuals as prime creative units in the overall structure of social reality.

With free will, humans can self-evaluate, weigh the most abstract choices, and think about their thoughts. They can travel to their past and envision their possible selves in some time in the future[1], obviously things which machines and the most intelligent animals cannot do[2]. Stephen Covey, in his *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, pinpoints the difference that makes the difference:

–Even the most intelligent animals have none of these endowments. To use a computer metaphor, they are programmed by instinct and/or training. They can be trained to be responsible, but they can‘t take responsibility for that training; in other words, they can‘t direct it. They can‘t change the programming. They‘re not even aware of it…between stimulus and response is our greatest power – the freedom to choose”[3].

The Quran (25:20) tells us something important in relation to the issues addressed above and that is the fact that members

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[1] Markus, H. & Cross, S. (1994) Self-Schemas, Possible Selves, and Competent Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*; 86 (3), 423-438.

[2] Philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) maintained that the process of willing and acting was perfectly regular and mechanical and that "its laws can be laid down with as much exactness as those of motion and light". At his time, Hume and similar philosophers explained everything, including human will, in terms of mechanical physics. Their mistake resided in studying human nature from a purely materialistic point of view while completely disregarding the spiritual component (Erdmann, Johann E. (1890) *History of Philosophy*, New York, Macmillan & Co, Vol. 2, p. 130).

[3] Covey, S. (2004) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Pocket Books, p.70.

of a human community are created as a test or trial for one another. Put rhetorically: How *should* we behave towards one another in a society or as societies? Individuals, parents, families, friendships, neighborhoods, alliances, unions, corporations, tribes, countries, and nations are social categories which are in continuous competition, cooperation, harmony, and/or struggle depending on the order of interests peculiar to each.

Elsewhere (Quran: 43:32) we are told that humans are caused to vary in wealth, power, and social status so that we may all exist interdependently and benefit from one another[1]. The Quran institutes a universal law of labor power and social structure which is neither approving of Marxist state hegemony nor welcoming of the inequities of consumptive liberal Capitalism. In other words, humans are created for one another, they can only exist interdependently, but having said this, all should work their way to establish justice within and between all forms of social interaction.

The amount of free will and autonomous power human beings enjoy is enough to make them responsible for their actions. In fact, many people seem to forget the fact that man is capable of wrenching the laws of physics to serve his own ends, and this indeed reflects a very high degree of free choice and markedly sets humans different from inanimate law-driven entities. When one squeezes a piece of dough, he is effectively causing an entire network of atoms and molecules to behave in a different way. Technology, manufacturing, and biochemical engineering are a living example of mans real influence on the

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[1] One may appreciate the meaning of the verse in the light of Norbert Elias' sociological insights. Sociologists are well-acquainted with Elias's observation that "people need each other, are directed towards and bonded to each other as a result of the division of labor, of occupational specialization, of integration into tribes or states, of a common sense of identity, and of their shared antagonism for others or their hatred and enmity towards each other" (Elias, N (1978) What is Sociology? London: Hutchinson, p. 13-32).

laws that shape his own life. As Pierre-Paul Grassé, the French zoologist and president of the French Academy of Sciences elegantly put it:

"To a certain extent, man influenced his own development by contributing to the enrichment of his inherited assets; without this active participation in his own evolution, man would not be what he is today. This form of evolution, which is unique within the animal kingdom, radically separates man from the animals"[1].

Two Types of Wisdom

"There is nothing permanent except change", says one Greek proverb. An ever-changing world is full of surprises, and new events shape the history of individuals as well as societies and nations. In such a world, human beings, out of natural curiosity, want to find an explanation for many of the events happening before their eyes. In other words, they want to know the rationale (*e'llah*) behind many of Allah's acts. In addressing this point, scholars have proposed two types of wisdom (*hikmah*) or rationale behind divine actions:

a. **Manifest Wisdom.**
b. **Hidden Wisdom.**

Manifest wisdom (*hikamh dhahirah*) qualifies that category of events which do not need any explanation on account of their manifest rationale. An example of a manifest religious wisdom is the prohibition of perjury and alcohol in Islamic law. The rationale behind prohibiting them resides in the fact that such acts are respectively corruptive and harmful. Another example is issuing the pillar of *Zakah*. The manifest wisdom

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[1] Quoted in: Bucaille, Maurice (2002) *What is the Origin of Man? The Answers of Science & the Holy Scriptures*, IBS, India, p. 125.

here is obvious: to help solve problems of poverty and starvation, to name a few. Rain as a natural phenomenon also reflects a manifest wisdom: to provide water for fauna and flora, and sustain humans with such an important element of life. Think about the sphericity of planet earth. Had it not been spherical, life on it would have become impossible. There would be no alteration of day and night, no appropriate gravity, no water cycle, and so forth.

Besides manifest wisdom, there is 'hidden wisdom' (*hikmah khafiyah*) which pertains to that category of events for which one cannot find a definite explanation or any explanation at all. One can say these are unexplainable happenings or phenomena because they do not appear to serve a definite end or fulfil a discernable function. There are many incidents which happen in this world, before our eyes, and yet we cannot find the slightest clue as to their explanation. Some observers may consider them to be random, or may regard them as accidental epiphenomena emanating from a long chain of chaotic events. Existentialists are well known for dramatizing this aspect of life.

However, the Quran solves this riddle in the instructive story of the Prophet Moses who embarked on a journey to find Al-Khadhir, a sage whom Allah had given knowledge and wisdom to. When Moses found Al-Khadhir, he asked if he could accompany him to learn from his knowledge and wisdom. The sage expressed consent, but on condition that Moses would not protest against what he was about to see throughout journey. Moses made the promise to remain patient and they both set out. But it wasn't long before Moses was shocked by Al-Khadhir‘s actions who gratuitously pierced a hole in a docking ship, killed a boy, and set up a wall that was about to fall. Overwhelmed by anger and curiosity, Moses forgot to keep his promise and criticized Al-Khadhir for what appeared to be unwarranted actions. In return, Al-Khadhir decided to end the journey and forsake Moses for being

impatient, but after having explained to Moses the wisdom behind everything he had seen.

Readers are left with the Quran to discover the 'hidden wisdom' for themselves:

> "As for the ship", explained Al-Khadhir "it belonged to poor people working in the sea. So I wanted to damage it, as there was a king after them who seized every ship by force.
>
> And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we knew that he would offend them with oppression and infidelity (when he grows up). So we wanted their Lord to give them instead of him (the boy) a better one in righteousness and mercy.
>
> And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphans in the town; and there was a treasure under it that belonged to them; and their father was a righteous man, and your Lord willed that they attain the age of full strength and dig out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. None of that was done out of my own accord. That is the interpretation of those (incidents) over which you were not able to observe patience"[1].

In this connection, I cite an informative commentary by historian William M. Watt who wrote:

"The futility of human attempts to understand in detail the purposes of God is forcibly expressed in the story (18.65-82). This story is set in a world far from that of realism or naturalism, but the point it is intended to convey is clear. In the events which happen to men God has a purpose, but no man, not even a good and intelligent man, can by the use of his intellect discover that purpose. It follows that man must always be patient in accepting what happens to him and must

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[1] Quran: 18: 79-82.

continue to trust in God and to believe that he is good, even when appearances suggest the opposite"[1].

Jeffrey Lang, from Kansas University, contemplated the story in his *Struggling to Surrender* and commented:

"The reader finds himself attempting to anticipate the solution of a timeless riddle: how can ostensibly evil things serve a greater good? As he tries in his own mind to resolve it, he is in fact teaching himself about Divine justice and the nature of good and evil"[2].

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[1] Watt, W. Montgomery (1979) Suffering in Sunnite Islam. *Studia Islamica*, No. 50, (edit.) p.14.

[2] Lang, Jeffery (2000) *Struggling to Surrender*, United States, p. 43. I would like to raise a useful notion which may be called **Purposeful Chaos**. Many events just happen to appear to be chaotic, but are they really chaotic and lacking in purpose? The answer is 'No', at least from an Islamic perspective. Broadly speaking, many events may appear chaotic yet, at the same time, work purposefully. An example of purposeful chaos can be the dice game. Humans created the dice, etched the dots, and specified the rules of the game. These are obviously planned. In all cases, the range of unpredictability (or possibilities) while playing the game is finite because it is determined by the number of dots, the nature of the rules, shape of the dice, and may be other factors. So, even the outcomes are predetermined in some way despite the element of unpredictability and despite the many superfluous throws in each turn. All in all, the game, although apparently chaotic in its results, is purposeful because it has been designed to achieve a purpose (e.g. fun, recreation, etc). Hence, it is not at all impossible or implausible to conceive of a world, a system, where much of its dynamics and interactions appear chaotic but in reality serve a certain purpose.

[4] Belief in the Last Day:

> "The prospect of a finite life was thought by many philosophers to be an incentive to use our time on Earth wisely. If life were unending, then there would be no natural development, no urgency, no sense of completion".
>
> (John Barrow)[1]

The American psychologist and philosopher, William James, once wrote:

–A man's religious faith means for me essentially his faith in the existence of an unseen order of some kind in which the riddles of the natural order may be found explained"[2].

James' definition of faith, although inconclusive, underscores a profound religious experience: belief in the *Ghaib* or the unseen, which in Islam is one of the six fundamentals of faith (*iman*). Broadly speaking, belief in the unseen, in its own right, is not a reserved religious trademark or a way of thinking that is intrinsically hostile to human reason. In fact, it springs from a deep yet inexplicable sensation that some solemn finality awaits all existence. Almost everyone has had the experience, or hunch, that the meaning of our earthly striving must eventually reveal itself in another form of life. It could be a parallel unseen world which we do not yet comprehend (e.g. the Hindu reincarnation), a future omega point in which everything will culminate or just a recurring anticipation of an ultimate end in the far future. Where do our hopes, memories, dreams, and achievements go after death? What will happen to the vigour of life and the history of all humanity? What is going to be done about the unfinished scene of life, the scene where oppressors, tyrants, criminals and evildoers evade justice and get away with it?

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(1) Barrow, John D. (2005) *The Infinite Book*, Vintage Books, p. 248.
(2) James, Williams (1895) Is Life Worth Living? *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Oct.), p. 15.

How are we going to find compensation for our sorrows and sufferings or rewards for our rectitude and positive actions?

Many of the scholars deeply concerned with the subject of morality, have noticed a strong association between the tendency to think highly of oneself and belief in immortality; that is a belief in an eternal life. James H. Leuba, well-known for his work in the psychology of religion, has observed that "the desire for immortality finds its main support in the desire to think highly of oneself and the Universe". "This last motive", states Leuba "rises to great influence only in persons of considerable moral and intellectual distinction"[(1)]. To such persons, the idea of eternal annihilation is not only abhorring but also infinitely unappreciative of the significance of human life[(2)].

Far more sensitive are those who believe in Allah and are well acquainted with the meanings of His Attributes. To them, life is nothing but void without belief in *Yawmul Jam',* the Day of Gathering; the day on which Allah's Attributes of Justice and Mercy will come to full manifestation. According to the Quran (64:9; 18:99; 3:9), all humanity will be gathered before Allah and every soul will receive a complete record of its earthily deeds. "On that day", wrote Lang "we will face the truth of what we have become as all temporal distractions and illusions are stripped away and we are left alone with only our core beliefs and moral-spiritual achievements"[(3)].

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(1) Leuba, James H. (1921) *The Belief in God and Immortality: A Psychological, Anthropological, and Statistical Study*, London, (edit.), p.311.

(2) Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher, believed that for morality to be effective in regulating human conduct, one must believe in divine justice in the afterlife. Otherwise morality will cease to function effectively and will only become an object of temporal admiration. (Kant, Immanuel (1998) *Critique Pure Reason*. Translated and Edited by: Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood. Cambridge University Press, p. 681).

(3) Lang, Jeffery (2000) *Struggling to Surrender*, United States, p. 54.

"Then anyone who does a mote's weight of good will see it. And anyone who does a mote's weight of evil will see it"[1].

This Day is also called (Quran: 64:9) the Day of Loss and Gain (*Yawmu Taghabun*), because believers will rejoice in everlasting reward while disbelievers will sustain a horrific loss and suffer the torment of *Jahannam*[2] for all eternity.

"There! Every self will come to realize what it had earned before, and they are returned to Allah, their true Lord"[3].

Belief in the Afterlife, as is the case with all extra-physical matters, is neither proven nor acknowledged by the positivistic mindset[4]. Immortality is meaningful only to those who cherish the gift of existing, who are genuinely concerned with the question of justice, morality, and the meaning of life. To such people, "the annihilation of the priceless riches which life represents and, as it seems to many, the consequential futility and irrationality of an earthly existence **are unbearable thoughts**"[5].

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[1] Quran: 99: 7-8.
[2] Known in Jewish eschatology as 'Gehenna', 'Gehenom', and 'Gehinom'. See an earlier discussion on the origin of Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic.
[3] Quran: 10:30.
[4] Positivism: the doctrine that empirical and observational data are the only reliable modes of knowledge.
[5] [5] Leuba, James H. (1921) *The Belief in God and Immortality: A Psychological, Anthropological, and Statistical Study*, London, p.311-12. **One nationwide study (Ellison et al.: 2009) has revealed** that "belief in an afterlife bears a direct positive relationship to tranquility, and an inverse association with anxiety. It also seems to reduce the deleterious effects of financial decline on anxiety". "These apparent benefits", conclude Ellison and his colleagues "may result from a sense of cosmic/ divine justice, and the promise of future spiritual rewards that surpass those available in this life. Further, with the promise of afterlife may come less reason for self-doubt, anger, or recrimination, as well as reduced feelings of urgency to maximize benefits and

> "For those who desire the life of the present and its luster, We shall pay in full (the price of) their deeds therein, without the least diminution. Such are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire; in vain have become the works they achieved therein (in the present life), and of no avail have become the deeds they used to do"[(1)].

As far as science is concerned, there is a near consensus among scientists - drawn from common experience and scientific data - that our universe is heading towards an inevitable end. According to the Quran, this is a fact beyond doubt:

> "Allah gives you life, then causes you to die, then He will assemble you on the Day of Resurrection about which there is no doubt. But most of mankind know not"[(2)].

According to Barrow, the survival of the universe is largely contingent on what are formally known as the Constants of Nature. Barrow maintains, on behalf of many scientists in the field, that due to the universe's expansion, such constants are destined to reach values which prevent the existence of atoms, nuclei, planets, and stars; hence causing the universe to become lifeless and ~~u~~nable to contain the building blocks of complexity". "Then life", adds Barrow "like all good things, must come to an end"[(3)]. A team of other scientists subscribes to the Open Universe model, where the universe just keeps expanding indefinitely[(4)], and, as a result of expanding beyond

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minimize costs in this life". (Ellison, C. G. et al. (2009) *Blessed Assurance: Religion, Anxiety, and Tranquility among US Adults*. Social Science Research, 38: 664).

(1) Quran: 11:15-16.

(2) Quran: 45:26.

(3) Barrow, John D. (2003) *The Constants of Nature*, Vintage, p. 274.

(4) *Ibid*. p. 269.

the critical limit of density and gravity, the universe will inevitably disintegrate.

Physicist Brian Greene, in his book *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, explains the mechanism of another competing model known as the Big Crunch. He states that "one possible fate for our universe is that the current expansion will one day halt, reverse, and the universe will implode, ending in the so-called big crunch"[(1)]. This latter scenario appears to coincide with Islamic cosmology, where all existence is seen as bi-directional, coming from God and returning to God. It is at once "centrifugal (expanding, moving outwards) and centripetal (imploding, moving inwards)"[(2)]. In the Quran's depiction of the Last Day, *Assamaa*[(3)] will be caused to "revert" or, in the Quran's wording, "roll" back to its former state, after having expanded for an unknown time:

> "And (remember) the Day when We shall roll up the heaven, as We roll up a scroll upon what is written. As We have first originated the initial creation, We shall bring it back to its original form. (It is) a promise binding upon Us. Truly, We shall fulfill it"[(4)].

> "It is Allah Who begins (the process of) creation; then repeats it, then to Him you will be returned"[(5)].

The collapse of the universe is triggered by a series of cataclysmic disorders, heralding the threshold of a new eternal world (Quran: 81, 82, and 84).

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(1) Greene, Brian (2005) *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, Vintage, p. 511; Hawking, Stephen (2001) *The Universe in a Nutshell*, Bantam Press, p. 95-96.
(2) Chittick, William C. (2007) *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World*, Oneworld Books, Oxford, p. 141.
(3) *Assama* in Arabic is a reference to all that is above us, including space or the heavens.
(4) Quran: 104: 21.
(5) Quran: 30:11.

"When the heaven is cleft asunder. And when the planets are dispersed. And when the seas are ruptured. And when the graves are turned over, every soul (at that time) will realize what (deed) it has proceeded and what (deed) it has left behind"[1].

According to the Quran, cosmic disorders will precede the coming of the Last Day

Death is not the end of everything. It is neither an eternal annihilation of the self nor a transmigration of the soul. In the Quran, death is a journey to a new order of life called *Barzakh*, the intermediary life; beyond which we continue our journey to meet the one true Creator:

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[1] Quran: 82: 15: In his exegesis of the Quran, Imam Ashawkaani explains that "proceeded deeds" and "deeds left behind" are expressive of what man used to do at the beginning and end of his life, or may mean deeds which man had "proceeded" for himself, in terms of reward, and deeds which had outreaching impact after his demise i.e. deeds left behind. (*Fat-hil Qadeer*, p. 492, Daralkutubil Elmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon)

"Say: "Verily, the death from which you flee will surely meet you, then you will be returned to the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will remind you of what you have done"[1].

Muslims believe that what they do in the present has a meaning and that they will encounter the outcome of their earthily striving in *Al-Akhirah* (The Second Life). Logically speaking, life after death is more than possible:

"And man says, "When I am dead, shall I really be resurrected? Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing?"[2].

"Do they not see that Allah, Who has created the heavens and earth, and was not fatigued by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Yes, surely, He is able to do all things"[3].

In fact, arguing for resurrection is more rational than arguing otherwise:

"They say: "when we are bones and fragments, shall we be raised up as new creation? Say: Be stones or iron. Or some created thing that is yet greater in your thoughts! Then they will say: who shall bring us back (to life). Say: He Who has created you in the very beginning. Then they will shake their heads at you, and say: when will it be? Say: It will be soon"[4].

Every individual, given liberty to weigh truth against falsehood, is free to choose the world he or she desires most:

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[1] Quran: 62: 8.
[2] Quran: 19:66.
[3] Quran: 26: 27.
[4] Quran: 17:49.

"And among you are those who desire Dunya (this world) and those who desire the Hereafter"[1].

In the end, our choice is primarily dependent on how much we value our own lives and the totality of existence:

"And we have not created the heaven and earth and all that is between them without a purpose. That is the attitude of those who disbelieve"[2].

However, the penalty of disbelief may not necessarily take effect in the present life. For example, we should not expect to see an obvious and necessary correlation between disbelief and hardship. According to the Quran (89:15-16), this is a misleading standard as both parties (believers and disbelievers) are predestined to enjoy their lot of worldly gains:

"On both, these and those, We will bestow our provision for never has our provision been suspended"[3].

But when this life is over and all vanities become dispersed, only those who remained true to Allah's message (Quran: 2:40; 13:20) will be spared immeasurable loss in the Afterlife[4]. The Quran depicts the finality of disbelief:

"Verily, those who do not hope to meet Us, and are pleased and contented with Dunya (the present world), and those who are heedless of Our Ayat (proofs, signs). Those! Their abode will be the Fire, because of what they used to do"[5].

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[1] Quran: 3:152.
[2] Quran: 38:27.
[3] Quran: 17:20.
[4] After all, didn't Darwinian evolutionists tell us, time after time, that survival is only for the fittest!
[5] Quran: 10:7.

One day, the Prophet was sitting with his companions, watching the sun as it was about to sink below the horizon. The Prophet then turned to his companions and said, –Compared to the ages that have elapsed, all that is left from the age of this world is like what is left of this day"[1].

The life of this world will come to an end

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(1) Attabari, Ibn-Jareer, *Attaareekh*, (16/1).

[5] & [6] Belief in the Messengers and the Books of Revelation:

If there weren't any significant differences among nations, Samuel Huntington may not have written *The Clash of Civilizations*. If all humanity had conformed to a common belief and value system, we would have been spared the dilemma of many '–isms': capitalism, communism, socialism, Marxism, Leninism, McCarthyism, secularism, existentialism, Confucianism, pragmatism, idealism, realism, romanticism, liberalism,…the list is endless. Even at the individual level, there are radical differences. Each one has a different worldview, a unique system of values and beliefs, to the extent that someone from the Far East may grossly misunderstand another from the West.

Different geographical, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds breed different and sometimes conflicting needs, hence, the rise of diverse traditions, ideologies, and political systems each claiming to solve the problems of humankind. Earlier in this book, we discussed the problem of totally relying on human reason and the danger of viewing man as an entirely self-reliant agent. No matter how objective our interpretation of reality, no matter how effective man made systems may appear to be, we cannot solve all our problems and, as long as there exist drastically varying interests, many questions will remain unanswered and conflicts will persist until the end of time[1]. The matter is more problematic when it comes to deciding what is morally good or evil, lawful or unlawful in our lives.

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[1] Bernard Gert, in his *Morality: Its Nature and Justification*, explained that "all rational persons do not always agree on which consequences are better and which worse. Further, even if they agree on which are better and worse, they can still disagree on how to act. Disagreement on how to act can stem from differences about who will be harmed or benefited by the action". (Gert, B (2005) *Morality: its Nature and Justification*, Oxford University Press, p. 100).

A subtle argument that can be made here is that humans cannot resist passing judgments about being and the universe. They pass judgments on life, on the meaning of the universe, on morality, and so forth. In many, if not all, cases such judgments are unmistakably universal and assertive as if we were in charge of interpreting everything that happens around us. The way we utter such judgments carries an aura of dominance and vanity as if we had the clout to determine the course of things or the right to subject other people's lives to our own personal worldviews.

In this sense, even atheists to the core, who despise to give morality any transcendent interpretation, fall into the trap of passing inclusive judgments on peoples' lives and what they should believe. They deny Allah and assume his role; they reject the revealed religion and inject their own version of what it means to be religious. The very act of passing (quasi) universal judgements on life, people, and morality is an exercise which will always be abused by humans and, consequently, shall remain an ill-begotten right. It is a right that should belong to Allah, the real and rightful Proprietor. All of us stand in need of guidance and it is Allah alone, the Creator of everything, who fully knows what's best for mankind and what human existence is all about.

> "... it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you; Allah knows but you do not know"[1].

Sociologist Anthony Giddens has shown that individuals' actions in a given society continually produce *unintended* consequences[2], even consequences which in some cases may cause the decline, disintegration, or extermination of an entire

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[1] Quran: 2:216.

[2] Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, Blackwell, p. 27.

society. Thus, Giddens rightly puts it that "human history is created by intentional activities...]yet[persistently eludes efforts to bring it under conscious direction"[1]. This has important implications for us. Humans, on the individual and collective levels, cannot always steer their lives to their desired states, let alone determine the universal trajectory of human life.

Invoking adaptation and natural selection to explain this dilemma is both insufficient and impractical. Insufficient not only because of the lack of sound evidence but also because of growing counter evidence that such processes (adaptation and natural selection) are both informationally loaded and guided mechanisms. That is they themselves are not (final) explanations but need to be explained. Furthermore, they are impractical because, as can be inferred from above, such explanations issue from cyclic reasoning. We can only explain adaptation and natural selection by recourse to adaptation and natural selection. The Selector, the Author of selection, is either ignored or unknown.

The bottom-line here is that everything in the observable physical world is explanatorily impoverished. We need a thirst-quenching all-embracing explanation why humans and nature mesh together in a significantly meaningful way. In such a world, only "persons of considerable moral and intellectual distinction"[2], noticed the American psychologist James Leuba, can free themselves from mundane trifling, see through the shades, and beg answers from a higher order of existence.

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(1) *Ibid*.

(2) Leuba, James H. (1921) *The Belief in God and Immortality: A Psychological, Anthropological, and Statistical Study*, London, (edit.), p.311

So, can the need for revelation be justified? Or should we jettison divine guidance[1], assure ourselves that everything is fine, and pretend that mankind will live happily ever after? Consider the following questions:

Who are we, what's the purpose of life, and why should we ask these questions? Is there an ultimate explanation to everything or is it an unimportant question anyway? Is human life an end in itself or should we seek a higher end? Are we unique beings, existing for a special purpose on a special planet, or are we just accidental interlopers who will soon disappear for all eternity?[2] Is there a Creator, Who is He, and how should we relate to Him? What is good and evil, wrong and right in our lives? Are there any absolute values or is everything relative?[3] Do we need a universal morality and if so who decides it?[4] Are there limits to freedom? Who decides ethics, human rights, and the norms of social conduct? Should there be penal systems and codes of conduct and who decides them? **And most important of all is**: who is going to answer these questions and put an end to our curious anxiety?

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[1] Immanuel Kant attempted to establish a philosophy of human autonomy: the view that by relying on our own reason human beings can live up to the basic principles of knowledge and action without outside assistance, above all without divine support, intervention, or revelation (See Gayer, P. (1998, 2004). Kant, Immanuel. In E. Craig (Ed.), Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. London: Routledge. @ http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DB047, accessed May 09, 2010). **But when it comes to reality**, and this is the most important part, reliance on reason alone has been the source of many problems and the generator of much misguidance.

[2] Stephen Jay Gould feared that "life may not, in any genuine sense, exist for us or because of us". "Perhaps", he says "we are only an afterthought, a kind of cosmic accident, just one bauble on the Christmas tree of evolution…we are a detail, not a purpose" (Gould, S. J. (1990) *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, p. 16, 154).

[3] Gaita, Raimond (2004) *Good and Evil: an Absolute Concept*, Routledge, p. 283.

[4] Schwartz, S. H. (2007) Universalism, Values, and the Inclusiveness of Our Moral Universe, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*; 38; 711.

In such a situation, we have no choice but to appeal to a source of truth that transcends the prejudices of human interest. This source we call revelation, Allah's message to mankind. The need for revelation naturally follows from several premises established earlier, such as 'human beings are fallible and incapable of knowing the purpose of life without divine guidance', 'man made systems are inadequate and sometimes susceptible to arbitrary change', 'humans pass their vulnerabilities on to the laws they legislate', 'human life is meaningful', 'existence is not without purpose', 'belief in God is not only rational but also a natural part of being', 'atheism is a departure from the universal norm', and 'morality and belief in immortality are intimately related'.

"Man's knowledge is limited", notes Abul A'la Mawdudi, the well-known Islamic thinker, who penetratingly writes:

"Every man in every age does not, by himself, know what is good and what is evil, what is beneficial and what is harmful to him. The sources of human knowledge are too limited to provide him with the unalloyed truth. That is why God has spared man the risks of trial and error and revealed to him the law"[(1)].

Messages need Messengers. According to the Quran, Messengers are men of superb character, chosen by Allah to establish *tawheed* and convey the law to their people. They are described as men of faith, dignity, perseverance, truthfulness, and rectitude[(2)]. The most steadfast among them are five: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad[(3)]. In Islam, Messengers must neither be elevated to the rank of worshipped divinities, as Jesus is in Christianity[(4)], nor downgraded to

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(1) Mawdudi, Abul A'la (1989) *Towards Understanding Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, p. 101.

(2) Quran: 21: 72, 75, 84-86, 90.

(3) Murad, Mahmoud (1998*) Islam in Brief*, Cooperative Office, Riyadh, p. 28.

(4)Abraham Scultet, in his *Exercitations,* told the truth about Jesus. Scultet asserted that "should any one peruse the evangelical narrative

stigmatized figures, as portrayed in some parts of the Old Testament[1]. We are told in the Quran[2] that some of them were believed and followed while some were rejected, persecuted, or even killed by their own people. If it happened that the people rebelled and their rebellion became intolerable, Messengers would supply undeniable proofs in support of their case.

> "Indeed, We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the balance so that mankind may uphold justice"[3].

The ‗clear proofs' mentioned in this verse include the truths of revelation, Messengers' integrity, their unwavering tenacity, and, as a last resort, the empowering of Messengers to perform miracles. Throughout history, the message revealed to all Messengers hinges upon one fundamental truth: belief in the Oneness of Allah, devotion of worship to Him alone, and the rejection of false deities.

> "We have assuredly sent amongst every people a Messenger, with the command: worship Me and avoid false gods"[4].

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with the requisite attention, **he would hardly affirm that the persons who worshipped Christ while on earth acknowledged him to be the Son of God. They believed, indeed, that he was a distinguished prophet**, sent by the Almighty, by whose assistance he cured the blind, the deaf, and the lame" (Wilson, Join (1864) *Unitarian Principles Confirmed by Trinitarian Testimonies: Being Selections from the Works of Eminent Theologians Belonging to Orthodox Churches*, Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, p. 469).

[1] In Genesis 9: 23-24, Prophet Noah is depicted as a drunkard, who appeared naked before his family members.

[2] Chapter 11 in the Quran is almost entirely dedicated to stories of Messengers with their people and how they responded to their message.

[3] Quran: 57: 25.

[4] Quran: 16: 36.

Although the basic message in all revelations is one, forms of worship and legal particularities may differ from one message to another. Such differences, commensurate with the circumstances of each generation, are intended as part of the test:

> "**To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way**. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one nation, **but (He willed not) in order to test you in what He has given you**; so compete in good deeds. The return of you (all) is to Allah; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ"[1].

Sceptics, however, have questioned the idea of Messengers: —Why send Messengers when Allah had already known everyone's fate?" To this question, the Quran answers:

> "...Messengers as bearers of glad tidings and admonishment, **in order that mankind should have no excuse against Allah** after (having sent) the Messengers"[2].

Yet, some may obstinately ask, —But why are Messengers ordinary human beings? Could not Allah have made them superhuman, assisted by angels, or, at least, made them possess extraordinary power and wealth? In this way, people would have found a reason to believe". The logic behind these questions is not new. The disbelievers at the time of the Prophet came up with similar demands:

> "And they say, "Why does this Messenger eat food, and walk about in the markets (like us). Why is not an angel sent down to be a warner with him?

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[1] Quran: 5: 48.
[2] Quran: 4: 165.

Or (why) has not he been granted a treasure, or why does not he have a garden whereof he may eat?" And the wrongdoers say, 'You follow none but a bewitched man'

See (Mohammad) how they have propounded the examples for you, went astray, and as a result cannot find a path (to truth)"[1].

Elsewhere in the Quran, the reason for selecting Messengers from among the human race is clearly stated:

"And We have never sent before you (Mohammad) any of the Messengers but, verily, they ate food and walked in the markets. And We have made you (human beings) **as a trial for one another to test your patience**"[2].

However, one may still ask: ―What is the point in subjecting humankind to trial in the first place?"[3]

But this is an impractical question. To ask it is as illogical as asking ―what is the point in subjecting students to examination at school?" or asking "Why should applicants be asked to submit their qualifications when applying for a job?".

The main function of revelation is to establish tawheed, supply the missing part of it, or dismiss the misconceptions surrounding its meaning. Mohammad is the last of the Prophets and he was sent to all mankind. The Messengers before him were sent to a certain people, yet they all preached the fundamental concept of *tawheed*. Simply stated and freed from the vagaries of philosophical discourse, *tawheed* is a complete submission to the will of Allah**.** *Tawheed* comprises

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[1] Quran: 25: 7-9
[2] Quran: 25: 20.
[3] Questions like these are called 'sequential questions' because one could have asked a bigger question, such as: Why did God create us in the first place? Besides being sequential, they are unrealistic, especially when their purpose is to doubt an existential given.

two segments: firstly, that there is only One ultimate Creator, not three in one, not a god among many gods, not a pantheistic being but One who is unique (*Fard*), Self-Sufficient (*ghani*), and in full possession of power (*Qawee*) and perfection (*Kamil*). Secondly, total submission to this Creator and devotion of worship to Him alone (*Ikhlas*). This is the message of all Prophets in the past, including Jesus the 'Prophet of Nazareth'[1].

However, for historical and religious reasons, the concept of *tawheed* has sustained considerable distortions. Allah's Oneness was later supplanted by the incarnation or Triune doctrine. His uniqueness was compromised by unrestricted Judaic anthropomorphism[2]. In the final analysis, it became

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[1] Paul E. Davies studied the life of Jesus and published his study in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1945. In the light of biblical accounts, Paul Davies concluded that Jesus was better suited to the role of a Prophet. Davies reported that later titles such as 'Son of God' and 'Christ' may have suppressed the "most primitive title" which is that of being a Prophet; "yet", remarks Davies, such titles "never blotted out entirely the earliest impression that Jesus was the prophet of Nazareth. For Davies, it is "startling to find that Paul, our earliest New Testament written source, is silent on Jesus' career as a Prophet". "The startling thing", says Davies "is that Paul's letters contain no references to Jesus as a Prophet". For the purposes of the discussion, I quote three informative excerpts from Davies article:

a. "His (Jesus) protest against the ritual system was akin to this persistent note in the early prophets." The predictive element in apocalyptic would strike Jesus' auditors as definitely prophetic".

b. "Once again, Jesus used the language of the prophet to describe his work by the power of the Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, etc.," and apparently the Rabbis of the time regularly attributed the prophet's power and inspiration to the Holy Spirit".

c. "The prophetic role would be still further confirmed for the primitive community by what Jesus said concerning himself and his followers. The Nazareth episode, "A prophet is not without honor etc.," the word to his followers about "receiving prophet in the name of a prophet".

d. "The tradition of Jesus' miracles and healings would be strong evidence to the popular mind that Jesus was a prophet".

(Davies, Paul E. (1945) Jesus and the Role of the Prophet. *Journal of Biblical Literature* (edit.); Vol. 64, No. 2. (June), p. 241,254).

[2] The difference between restricted and unrestricted anthropomorphism has been discussed earlier.

evident to Judeo-Christian scholars that the Bible was no longer reliable on matters of faith. As Arthur E. Watham pointed out, several Biblical scholars are convinced that "the sphere of the Bible‘s infallibility has been steadily narrowed”[1].

And Rev. Chancellor Lias who, in correspondence with *The Guardian*, wrote:

"It becomes ever (*sic.)* more clear to the Bible student that there is a large human element in Scripture"[2].

Daniel Hillel, in an environmental exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures, also expressed misgivings about the authenticity of biblical documentation. He says:

"What does raise many doubts in the mind of an impartial reader of the Bible is the apparent lapse of time between the occurrence of an event and its later (sometimes much later) formal documentation, and the additional time between the composition of that document and its editing and selective insertion into the Bible"[3].

This is why another Messenger was needed to revive the meaning of *tawheed* and purify it from the errors that have been attached to it. This time the Messenger was Prophet Mohammad, known as the Seal of the Prophets (*Khaatamul Nabieen*). The call to pure tawheed was the essence of the message he promulgated and this was revealed to him through the Quran, which is also known as the book of distinction (*furqaan*) between truth and falsehood, the wise reminder (*althikr alhakeem*), and the best of speech (*Ahsana alhadith*). Because it is the final revelation to all mankind, not to a

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(1) Watham, Arthur E. (1910) The Bible in the New Light, *Biblical World Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p 50.
(2) *Ibid*: p. 49.
(3) Hillel, Daniel (2006) *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures*, Columbia University Press, p. 232.

specific people, Allah has promised to preserve it from corruption until the end of time:

> "Verily, We have sent down the Quran and surely, We will guard it"[1].

> "And We have sent down to you (Mohammad) the Book in truth, confirming the Books that came before it and a dominant Book over of them. So judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you"[2].

Because it was revealed by the same God of all previous Messengers, it had to be consistent with the unadulterated truth of past scriptures:

> "He sent down to you the Book with truth, verifying the veracity of the Books that preceded it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel before as guidance to men and He sent down the Quran"[3].

Because it is going to abide with humanity forever, it had to be compatible with genuine science and the correct conclusions of human reason, and because some would doubt its authenticity, it had to be inimitable in content, style, and structure.

> "Say (O Mohammad): If the whole of mankind and Jinn gathered to produce the like of this Quran, they would never be able to produce the like thereof, even if every one of them supported the other"[4].

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[1] Quran: 15: 9
[2] Quran: 5: 48.
[3] Quran: 3: 2-4.
[4] Quran: 17: 88.

"Why do they not contemplate the Quran? Had it been revealed by other than Allah, they surely would have found therein much discrepancy"[1].

Murad Wilfried Hoffmann, a German Ambassador and ex-Catholic who embraced Islam, relates that:

"The textual analysis of the Quran, meticulously carried out by Western Orientalists, has fully substantiated both the authenticity of its text and its astounding compatibility with scientific research"[2].

Karen Armstrong wistfully admits:

"Even though I am in the early stages of learning Arabic, I have to recognize that I shall probably never be proficient enough to appreciate the beauty and the complexity of the Quran as a native speaker does"[3].

About the Quran

Jane Dammen McAuliffe, in her preface to *Encyclopaedia of the Quran,* admits that:

"The full force of this rhetorical diversity (in the Quran), however, may not be available to those who read the Quran in translation"[4].

Indeed, those who prefer to study the Quran in other than Arabic are most likely to lose out on its captivating splendour. Those who read the Quran for the first time and approach it with a negative preconception may, as Thomas Carlyle had done, hail it as a prolix or accuse it of containing an incoherent jumble of words and phrases. But isn't it utterly strange how

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(1) Quran: 82: 4.

(2) W. Hoffmann, Murad (1999) *Islam: The Alternative*, Amana publications, p. 57.

(3) Armstrong, Karen (2001) *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*, Anchor Books, p. 493.

(4) McAuliffe, Dammen J. (2002) *Encyclopedia of the Quran*, Vol. 1. Edited by Jane Dammen et al., Brill, Leiden–Boston–Kolon, p. 2.

such a seemingly 'incoherent jumble' could have the power to attract millions of people, from various walks of life, assimilating them into a 'coherent' worldwide community?

In any case, knowledgeable linguists attribute such misgivings about the linguistic character of the Quran to two primary causes:

1- Failure to understand linguistic features peculiar to Arabic.

2- The thorny task of translation.

The Quran was conveyed in the language of the Arabs at the time of revelation. The Arabs were reputedly masters of laconic poetry and oration. Their main linguistic strength significantly stemmed from the challenge of conveying an array of rich human experiences in as few words as possible. The Quran overwhelmed the Arabs by introducing an unprecedented form of linguistic economy.

To achieve this, various linguistic devices are creatively employed, notably *ellipses*. An ellipsis, Andrew Radford (1997) defines, is "a process by which redundant information in a sentence is omitted"[(1)]. The Quran's verses, due to ellipses, read so succinct and pithy that one is forced to slow down to extract as much meaning from the verse as possible. This may explain why the translators of the Quran repeatedly insert parenthesized words or phrases expressive of the tacit meanings left out by ellipsis. The principle of *linguistic economy* is further facilitated by the nature of the language which is a highly *inflected* one[(2)]. In linguistics, inflection is the process of adapting a word to its syntactic (grammatical) context as in the example of adding an 's' to achieve agreement between a verb and its subject in person and number, as illustrated for *sleep* below:

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(1) Kullavanijaya, Pranee (2005) Pro-forms. *Ibid*: p. 878.

(2) Barnard, Roger (2005) Inflection and Derivation. In *Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, edited by Philipp Strazny, Taylor & Francis Group, p. 529.

a. The child sleeps.
b. The children sleep[1].

Barnard Roger states that "in highly inflected languages such as Arabic, much information is conveyed very economically"[2] and as a result "the more highly inflected the language, the less important the order of words to convey meaning"[3]. It is this principle of economy to convey a smorgasbord of meanings that complicates the job of the translator. Hence, as R. Kirk Benlap points out, despite several translations attempting to impart the Quran's meaning, none of them can be regarded as the official/authorized one[4]. They all strive with varying degrees of accuracy and commitment.

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[1] Hacken, Pius T. (2005) Affixation. In *Ibid:* p. 12.
[2] Barnard, Roger (2005) Inflection and Derivation. In *Ibid*: p. 529.
[3] *Ibid*: p. 529.
[4] Benlap, R. Kirk (2005) Arabic. In *Ibid*: p. 75.

Level Three: Perfection

With 'perfection', the highest level of worship, we conclude the levels of worship. To attain this level one has to fulfil the requirements of Islam and faith. Prophet Mohammad defines perfection as worshipping "Allah as if you see Him and if you cannot then bear in mind that He sees you"[1].

Perfection represents the highest level of God-consciousness; that is acute awareness of one's relationship with Allah at all times. It is an intense experience of meaning and purpose, eradicating futilitarianism, existentialism, and disorientation from our lives. Hence, perfection is not a level where one **stops to rest on his/her laurels but an opportunity for progress towards excellence.** Islam's concept of perfection not only calls for perfecting the execution of prescribed worship such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, but also enjoins perfection in the carrying out of all legitimate activities, so that every portion of human life can yield the greatest possible value. This meaning is recapitulated by the Prophet:

—Verily, Allah likes that if any of you intends to perform a task that he perfects it"[2].

In Islam, much of the desire to attain perfection originates from appreciating our self-worth as honoured beings:

> "And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good and pure, and preferred them to many of what We have created with a marked preferment"[3].

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(1) *Muslim*, No.93.
(2) *Sahihul Jami'ssagheer,* No.1880.
(3) Quran: 17: 70.

Comprehensive Worship

> "Islam is certainly not, and never has been, just a religion. Rather, it is a complete way of life, with instructions on moral, political, and economic behaviour for individuals and nations alike".
>
> (Heywood, Andrew)[1]

In broadening the scope of worship, Islam presents itself as a complete way of life, encompassing all aspects of human existence. It puts laws for maintaining ideal social well-being and sets means by which the environment can be preserved and natural wildlife conserved. It provides guidance in all spheres of human life – spiritual and material, individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. Two essential attributes reinforce its all-embracing and versatile nature. **The first** is its practical flexibility and the second is its unifying character. The first attribute ensures a dynamic and convenient application of its law. **The second**, which primarily emanates from belief in the absolute Oneness of Allah, serves to satisfy and integrate man's multifarious needs, on the spiritual and the material level. This feature of Islam, it should be noted, dissolves the boundaries between the sacred and secular, the physical and metaphysical, merging the realms of human experience[2].

Shari'ah[3] is capable of administering a vast range of human affairs with considerable consistency and that is by

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[1] Heywood, Andrew (2003) *Political Ideology*, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 305.

[2] The Biblical phrase "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" separates the religious from the secular. In Islam you can't have this division.

[3] Shari'ah stands for the totality of the laws, beliefs, ethics, and morals constituting the message of Islam.

preserving six fundamental necessities, known as the Six Necessities (*Adharorat Assit*) and these are:

1) Preserving Religion. This means guarding the Muslim's belief system against distortion, doubt, or denial. This is actualized by seeking useful knowledge, basing beliefs on the Quran and Sunnah, and fortifying faith against myths, superstitions, and other spurious practices.

2) Preserving Life. This includes both securing one's right to life and holding human life sacred. All life threatening practices are forbidden. This includes harming oneself and others. Suicide, homicide, self-inflicted torture, and other harmful practices are strictly forbidden.

3) Preserving Sanity. This relates to safeguarding mental health. Our perception of the world, our understanding of reality, our consciousness and recognition of truth depend on the state of our sanity. Sabotaging the gift of sanity is a major sin[(1)].

4) Preserving Lineage, Chastity, and Dignity. That is maintaining the purity of descent and consanguinity by sanctifying chastity and prohibiting extramarital relationships[(2)]. The preservation of chastity is further secured

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(1) For necessities 2 and 3, examples of practices detrimental to physical and mental health include drugs, intoxicants, and potentially life-threatening activities.

(2) Quran: 17: 32. In the West, illicit relationships are soaring in rate and worsening in nature. “According to a report published by the British Medical Association, sexually transmitted infections, which include HIV/Aids, gonorrhea and syphilis, have soared by almost 300,000 cases between 1995 and 2000”. Research conducted by Dan Ariely, professor of Behavioural Economics at MIT, has revealed that it is not enough to warn people against the hazards of unsafe sex. "We must admit that carrying condoms and even vaguely understanding the emotional firestorm of sexual arousal may not be enough", says Ariely.

by illegalizing the means to sexual vice, such as molestation, pornographic industry, indecent clothing, and unlawful mixing of the sexes(1). The growing indifference in modern societies towards the issue of chastity (and dignity) has developed over the years into bystander apathy to sexual assaults committed in broad daylight(2). The preservation of dignity is realized

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According to research, the best and most practical solution is to distance oneself from sexually arousing settings and relationships as much as possible. This cautionary maxim is not unfamiliar to Muslims. The Quran (17:32) urges: "*and come not near adultery: for it is an open evil and ignominious road* "]Yusuf Ali's translation with necessary changes for accuracy [(See Ariely, Dan (2008) *Predictably Irrational: the Hidden Forces that Shape our Decisions*, HarperCollins, p. 100-102).

(1) In Islam, 'unlawful mixing' between the sexes refers to the mingling of male and female adults/adolescents who are not close relatives of one other, as prescribed in the Quran (24:31). Coeducation and mixed-sex workplaces are two examples. To appreciate the benefit of Islam's proscription of unlawful mixing, one may refer to a whole literature of studies treating this issue. For example, William F. Flack, Jr., Kimberly A. Daubman, and their colleagues have conducted the study 'Risk Factors and Consequences of Unwanted Sex among University Students: Hooking Up, Alcohol, and Stress Response', published in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Their study revealed the prevalence of unwanted sexual behaviors among college students (p. 140), a strong association between alcohol consumption and sexual assault (p. 141), and the fact that – which may surprise some – "most of these assaults were committed in the context of a 'date'"(p. 140). (See Flack, William F. et al. (2007) Risk Factors and Consequences of Unwanted Sex Among University Students: Hooking Up, Alcohol, and Stress Response, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, p. 139).

(2) Michael Cook recounts one incident:

"In the early evening of Thursday 22 September 1988, a woman was raped at a local train station in Chicago in the presence of several people. A brief account of the incident appeared that Sunday in the *New York Times*, based on what the police had said on the Friday. The salient feature of the incident in this account was that nobody had moved to help the victim, and her cries had gone unheeded – for all that the rape took place during the rush hour. As Detective Daisy Martin put it: 'Several people were looking and she asked them for help, and no one would help" (Cook, Michael (2004) *Commanding Right & Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, p. 8). **Compare this** to a scenario in 18th century Europe:

through guarding the individuals' reputation and secret life.[1] Islam thus strongly reprimands reputation-damaging practices such as slander, back-biting, and libel.

5) Preserving Wealth. This involves prohibiting the misuse and squandering of wealth as well as the proscription of unlawful financial transactions.

6) Preserving Environment. This pertains to protecting our planet from corruption. The Creator has made earth a fixed abode for man and other forms of life. He has set it in order and warned against corrupting it[2]. Forms of corruption include deforestation, pollution[3], nuclear waste, and weapons of mass destruction[4].

"When one man attacks, or robs, or attempts to murder another, all the neighbours take the alarm, and think that they do right when they run, either to revenge the person who has been injured, or to defend him who is in danger of being so" (Smith, Adam (2004) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Cambridge University Press; edited by Knud Haakonssen, p. 94).

[1] Part of taking responsibility for one's dignity is to not air your or somebody else's wrongdoings. In his *Reformation of the Churches*, James H. Leuba criticized the Catholic confession in a telling line. He argued that "to tell more or less disgraceful secrets of one's life to the leader of an organization to which one belongs, a person with whom one has to maintain social relations, would in many cases be highly repugnant" (Leuba, James H. (1950) *The Reformation of the Churches*, Boston, p. 175).
Islam holds a completely different view. It teaches the moral principle of *Sitr* which literally means to 'cover something', that is not to confess or disclose your wrongdoings to anyone but Allah. No intermediaries are to be set up between the Creator and his people. Islam considers this a form of *Shirk* (associating gods with Allah).

[2] "*And do not corrupt the earth, after it has been set aright*" (Quran: 7:56).

[3] Julian Borger from Washington reports, "The Bush administration plans to open a huge loophole in America's air pollution laws, allowing an estimated 17,000 outdated power stations and factories to increase their carbon emissions with impunity". (*Guardian*, Aug 23, 2003).

[4] According to the Center for Research on Globalization (3, March 2002), Russia and the USA now posses an arsenal of 20,000 nuclear

Within this broad frame work, Islam is capable of serving the various needs of human welfare. It is a comprehensive system inviting mankind to:

Call for good relations and beneficial international coexistence:

"O mankind! We have created you from male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious"[1].

Establish justice:

"Verily, Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice"[2].

"Do not let your hatred of a people incite you to oppression"[3].

Honour man:

"And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam, and have verily preferred them to many of what We have created"[4].

Respect human life:

"If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or spread mischief in the land – it would be as if he had

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war heads. Israel has quietly supplanted Britain and is now the world's 5th largest nuclear power, violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and posing a major threat to neighbouring countries.

[1] Quran: 49: 13.
[2] Quran: 4: 58.
[3] Quran: 5:3.
[4] Quran: 17: 70.

killed all of mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he had saved the life of all mankind"[1].

Honour parents and kinship:

"And that you be dutiful to your parents"[2].

Prophet Mohammad said, "Allah has prohibited you from impiety with mothers"[3].

Abu Sufyan also narrated that Heraclius, the Roman emperor, sent for him and asked, "What did he (Prophet Mohammad) order you?" I (Abu Sufyan) replied, "...and keep good relations with relatives"[4].

Treat the spouse with respect and ensure his/her rights:

"O you who believe you are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness in order to take away part of the dower you have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; and live with them on a footing of respect and equality"[5].

The Prophet Mohammad also says: "The best among you are the kindest to their wives and I am the kindest of you to his wife"[6].

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(1) Quran: 6: 32.
(2) Quran: 17: 23.
(3) *Bukhari*, No.5975
(4) *Bukhari*, No.5980.
(5) Quran: 4: 19.
(6) *Tirmithi*, No. 3895.

Combat intoxicants and useless pastimes:

"Satan wants only to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants (alcoholic drinks) and gambling"[1].

Spend wisely and avoid improvidence:

"And those, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but steer a middle course between both (extremes)"[2].

Enjoin lawful ownership:

"Do not take one another's property by false means"[3].

Help the distressed and care for the orphan:

The Prophet Mohammad said, "Feed the hungry, visit the ill, and set free the captive"[4].

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[1] Quran: 5: 91. Islamic law strictly prohibits all kinds of alcohol, drugs and intoxicants. In Islam, they are sources of evil and prime causes of social corruption. According to the American Medical Association (AMA), the use of alcohol and drugs was found to contribute to the risk of sexual assault. "A study of sexual assaults among college students found that 73% of the assailants and 55% of the victims had used drugs, alcohol, or both immediately before the assault" (American Medical Association : Information Please ® Database, © 2006 Pearson Education, Inc.) In Western law, gambling and alcohol consumption are classified as "victimless crimes", which means: "crimes that violate an existing law but do not harm another person" (*Thorndike Barnhart Dictionary*, Harper Collins). Paradoxically, if everybody is tempted by the leniency of this rule to commit his or her favorite "victimless crime", under the excuse that it does "not harm another person", then who is left in society unharmed?

[2] Quran: 19: 76.

[3] Quran: 2: 188.

[4] *Bukhari*, No. 5373.

"Come not near the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he (or she) attains the age of full strength"[1].

Have mercy for others:

Aisha, the Prophet's wife, narrated: a Bedouin came to the Prophet and said, "Do you kiss your children? We do not kiss them" The Prophet said, "I cannot put mercy in your heart after Allah has taken it away from it"[2].

Keep promises and fulfil commitments:

"And fulfil every covenant"[3], "And those who are faithfully committed to their duties and covenants"[4].

Observe honesty and integrity in transactions:

"And give full measure when you measure and weigh with a balance that is straight. That is good and better in the end"[5].

Protect people's dignity and reputation:

"Let not a group scoff at another group, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let (some) women scoff at other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Indeed, bad it is to be guilty of wrongdoing after having faith, and whoever does not repent is among the oppressors. O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicion is sinful. And neither spy nor backbite one another. Would

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(1) Quran: 8: 152.
(2) *Bukhari*, No.5998.
(3) Quran: 5:1.
(4) Quran: 23: 8.
(5) Quran: 17: 35.

one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother and then abhor such (so abhor backbiting?[1].

The Prophet Mohammad said, –Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales, and do not find faults with others, and do not spy on one another, and do not practice *Najash* (i.e. deceptive dealings in trading), and do not be jealous of one another and do not hate one another, and do not desert one another, and O worshippers of Allah! Be brothers"[2].

Seek and value knowledge:

"Are those who know equal to those who know not?"[3]

"Seek knowledge for none of you knows the time when his knowledge will be needed"[4].

"Allah will elevate to (higher) ranks those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all what you do"[5].

Conserve the environment:

"Do not corrupt the earth, after it has been set in order"[6].

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[1] Quran: 49: 11-12.
[2] *Bukhari*, No.6066.
[3] Quran: 39: 9.
[4] Narrated by Abdullah Ibin-Mas'ud, *Kitabul-ilm*, Abu-Kaithamah, p. 10.
[5] Quran: 58:11.
[6] Quran: 7: 56.

Work and overcome idleness:

The Prophet Mohammad said, –Certainly, it is far better than begging others, whether they give him or not, to bring a rope, gather wood in it and then sell it"[1].

Discuss affairs by mutual consultation:

"And who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation"[2].

Cooperate and help one another:

"Cooperate in the practise of good and doing Taqwa (avoiding Allah's displeasure), and never cooperate in committing sin and oppression"[3].

Conserve wildlife and care for animals:

Abdullah Ibn-Yazeed Al-Ansari narrated that the Prophet Mohammad –forbade Muthlah (mutilating a person or animal)" [4].

Shun slander and libel:

"O you who believe! If a bad person comes to you with any news, investigate its truth, lest you may unwittingly harm another people, and then become regretful for what you have done"[5].

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(1) *Bukhari*, No.1471.
(2) Quran: 42: 38.
(3) Quran: 5: 2.
(4) *Bukhari*, No. 2474.
(5) Quran: 49: 6.

Utilize the riches of earth and benefit from the resources of nature:

"Do you not see that Allah has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and has completed and perfected His graces upon you"[1].

"And He has made the ships to be of service to you (i.e. sea cargo, oil tankers…etc), that you may sail through the sea by His Command; and He has made rivers (also) of service to you (e.g. fishing, drinking water, irrigation…etc)"[2].

"And it is He who has subjected the sea (to you), that you may eat from it tender meat, and that you may bring out of it ornaments to wear (e.g. pearls)"[3].

"And He has made the day and night, the sun and the moon and the stars both constantly pursuing their courses by His Command, to be of service to you (e.g. solar energy, sun light, etc)" [4].

At its peak, Islam not only influenced adjacent cultures but also had a far-reaching impact on the making of the Western Civilization. In Biosard's estimation:

"The multiplicity, richness, and diversity of the ideas borrowed by the medieval West from Islamic culture is impressive. For nearly a millennium Muslims carried the torch of civilization to Christianity's western, eastern and southern boundaries. They formed the first truly universal culture, one based on monotheism[5] supported by an extremely elaborate

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[1] Quran: 31: 20.
[2] Quran: 14: 32.
[3] Quran: 16: 14.
[4] Quran: 16: 12.
[5] The coherence of Islamic monotheism engenders a balanced understanding of divine Attributes and this in turn has contributed

social, political, and legal organizational structure. Its splendour lasted twice as long as that of Ancient Greece, which had only known a system of City-States grouped around a polytheistic culture, and which had long ceased to be a "present" reality"[1].

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enormously to harmonizing Islam with the sciences. Dennis Overbye, writing for *The New York Times*, correctly observed that science "was another way to experience the unity of creation that was the central message of Islam" (*The New York Times*, Oct. 30, 2001: How Islam Won and Lost the Lead in Science).

[1] A. Boisard, Marcel (1980) On the Probable Influence of Islam on Western Public and International Law. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 447, Cambridge University Press.

A Swiss university professor, Marcel Biosard has lived for more than 12 years in Muslim countries, notably as a delegate of the international Committee of the Red Cross in Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt.

Defining the Framework

The major sources of Islamic law are four: the Quran, the authenticated Sunnah, established unanimity, and disciplined analogy.

The Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed both contain the broad outlines and detailed principles of Islam. The Quran, the fountainhead of Islamic law, is the uncreated word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Mohammad. The Sunnah is a companion to the Quran, clarifying, interpreting, and detailing the broad concepts articulated therein. As explained earlier, the word 'Sunnah' stands for the traditions constitutive of what Mohammad said, did, and approved of during his lifetime.

In his book, *Human Rights in Islam*, scholar Abul A'la Mawdudi recapitulates:

"The Quran laid down the broad principles on which human life should be based and the Prophet of God, in accordance with these principles, established a model system of Islamic life. The combination of these two elements is called the *Shari''d*"[(1)].

When all Muslim scholars, in a certain era, agree on a certain religious ruling it becomes binding. In this case scholars are said to have reached their opinion through *unquestionable* unanimity (*Ijma' Qat'ee*). Conversely, there is *questionable* unanimity (*Ijma' thanni*) which is not binding, because it is not certain whether all the scholars have agreed or whether any scholars have been left out. However, even though scholars may debate certain issues, their reasoning has to find clear support from the evidences in the Quran or Sunnah[(2)].

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(1) Mawdudi, Abul A'la (1980) *Human Rights in Islam*, U.K., p. 9.

(2) Since we have raised the question of unanimity which is not unrelated to consensus, we may talk a little about consensus. Consensus has been held by many as a criterion – but not the only

Newly occurring instances for which no ruling has been articulated in the Quran or Sunnah are treated in two ways:

1- Disciplined analogy (*Qiyas*).
2- Controlled interest (*Maslaha Mursalah*).

Regarding the first, an analogy is drawn between a new occurrence and an identical one, the ruling of which is already articulated in the Quran or Sunnah. If the similarity amounts to adequate significance, the ruling of the articulated occurrence is imparted to the new one[(1)]. For example, alcohol is explicitly prohibited in the Quran and Sunnah. Drugs (such as cocaine and heroin) were not known at the time of revelation, but are prohibited by means of analogy. The common rationale for prohibition is their intoxicating effect (*sukr*) and the real harm (*darar rajih*) they pose to individual and society. Note, that in the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, scholars differentiate among three types of harm: real harm, probable harm, and improbable harm; real harm must be eschewed, improbable harm may be tolerated, and in the case of probable harm, one is advised to avoid it. Constructing valid analogies, however, is no simple task. This is rigorously carried out through the science of *Usoolul Fiqh* or the Principles of Reasoning (or

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criterion - of truth. The German sociological philosopher Jürgen Habermas, for example, tried to assign a pragmatic aspect to truth via consensus. In other words, consensus can carry a strong moral/ethical imperative for the members of a given society. Early Muslim scholars did not overlook this issue and have treated the imperative status of consensus - although partially different from 'unanimity' on terminological grounds - and the conditions surrounding its validity with outstanding rigor (See Al-Ghazali, M (1997) *alMustasfa,* Al-Resalah Publishing House, p.325-375).

(1) According to another definition, analogy is "the assigning of the *hukm* (ruling, injunction, or prescription) for a thing to another thing, about which the law is silent, due to its resemblance to the thing for which the law has obligated the *hukm* or due to a common underlying cause (*'illah*) between them" (Nyazee, Imran Ahsan (2002) *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad*, The Other Press, p. 140).

Elicitation), the methodology of analyzing and interpreting the Quran and Sunnah in order to formulate certain rulings.

Controlled interest is a broader task[1]. It also deals with occurrences for which no evidences are articulated in the Quran or Sunnah. However, it differs from analogy in one major aspect. An inertest is an occurrence that does not lend itself to disciplined analogy because of the absence of specific identical cases. Nonetheless, the scholar has to make an effort and issue a ruling. The scholar in this case would turn to the primary goals (*Maqaasid*) of Islamic law, explore them, weigh the conclusions up, and then infer a ruling that conforms to the goals in question, but on condition that no real/probable harm follows from this procedure.

It is important to clarify what is meant by the word 'interest' in this context. Interest (*Maslaha*) is any benefit or gain that can be attained or maximized within the framework of *Shariah*. A contemporary case of controlled interest is the manufacture and utilization of technology. The Quran and Sunnah do not explicitly specify a particular ruling with regards to technology use or manufacture. Yet, the primary goals of Islamic law, deduced from a corpus of evidences from the Quran and Sunnah, collectively[2] encourage the manufacture and utilization of useful technology. Still, the ruling may change on account of other factors. For example, if a certain technology is going to be used for evil purposes,

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[1] I prefer to add the restriction 'controlled' although it might sound contradictory with the term *Maslaha Mursalah*, literally translated as 'unrestricted interest'. The literal translation implies that the *Shari'ah* is always ready to fulfill whatever interests the individual is after, which is not the case. Only the legitimate interests, endorsed by the primary goals of the law, are recognized and therefore amenable to jurisprudential reasoning.

[2] The condition of 'collectivity' is essential in this context because an interest that is not supported by an individual text must be endorsed by the texts considered collectively. Imran Ahsan (2002) has treated this topic in more detail in his book *Theories of Islamic Law: the Methodology of Ijtihad*.

then in this particular case the technology in question (e.g. detonator) is prohibited or unlawful. In contrast to the notorious Machiavellian standards[1], Islam does not justify evil means to achieve noble ends.

Scholars classify the domains of Islamic law into four major categories:

a. Belief (*I'tiqad*).
b. Acts of worship (*Ibadat*).
c. Transactions (*Mu''amalat*).
d. Morals (*Akhlaq*).

The domain of belief (*I''tiqadat*) addresses matters of faith such as the articles of faith which comprise belief in Allah, the Angels, the Books, the Messengers, the Last Day, and Fate or Destiny. This also includes the definition of the Sunnah and the refutation of *Bid'ah*, the antithesis of Sunnah.

The domain of acts of worship (*Ibadat*) prescribes forms of worship and enunciates the rulings and conditions that validate them.

The domain of transactions (*Mu''amalat*) discusses the principles and conditions which govern financial and economic dealings. It also lays down the laws that regulate social, political, and environmental activities.

The job of the last domain is to construct an effective moral matrix based on the core values underlying Islamic law.

In Islam, all forms of human conduct derive the status of their legitimacy from a five-scale continuum:

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[1] According to Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), the Italian philosopher and politician, a government "must do everything possible" (p. 137) to remain in power; hence the origin of the phrase, "the end justifies the means". (Machiavelli, Niccolò (1976) *The Prince*. Hackett Publishing Company, p. 137, 247).

1- Obligatory.
2- Recommended.
3- Permissible.
4- Disapproved of.
5- Forbidden.

The lucidity of the five-scale continuum - known as *Ahkam Takleefiyah* (legal states of actions) - originates from the clarity of the law. In fact, it distinguishes Islam from liberal systems where the borderlines separating right from wrong are increasingly blurred by people's demand for more and more freedom. Huston Smith commends:

"Compared with other religions, Islam spells out the way of life it proposes; it pinpoints it, nailing it down through clear injunctions. Every major type of action is classified on a sliding scale from the ~~–f~~orbidden," through the ~~–in~~different"]i.e. permissible[to the ~~–o~~bligatory." This gives the religion a flavour of definiteness that is quite its own. Muslims know where they stand"[(1)].

The passage of time is strong enough to erode the hardest rocks, let alone temporal human laws, which barely endure the lifetime of their own generations. Islam is exceptional to this rule, as it systematically bans all forms of *Bid''ah*[(2)] to maintain both the continuity and genuineness of its law. Again, this distinguishes Islam from systems notorious for their susceptibility to alienation and disorientation[(3)]. For this and

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(1) Smith, Huston (2001) *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, p. 48.
(2) That is innovating in the religion or the act of introducing forms of worship unendorsed by the Prophet or the primary goals of Islam.
(3) A fatal example of the whimsical nature of man-made systems is the abolishment and reinstatement of capital punishment. Former president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, recounts that in 1972 "the Supreme Court ruled that capital punishment, as it was then administered, was "cruel and unusual and therefore unconstitutional". Only four years later "the court", says Carter "overturned the ruling by a seven-to-two decision, while imposing some restraints, and capital punishment was reinstated" (Carter, Jimmy (2005) *Our Endangered*

many other reasons, Islam's influence has never been domestic. According to Will and Ariel Durant in their *Lessons of History*, Islam produced:

"Rulers, artists, poets, scientists, and philosophers who conquered and adorned a substantial portion of the white man's world from Baghdad to Cordova while Western Europe groped through the Dark Ages"[(1)].

Those who know little of Islam's outreaching impact may be struck by other facts, mainly Islam's significant contribution to the development of Western public and international law. "The legal influence of Islamic Arabic civilization on Europe at its awakening seems, however, to be incontestable"[(2)], wrote Marcel A. Boisard who elaborates:

"It was above all the very high ethical standard of Islamic law that impressed the medieval West and provoked the development of a more refined legal thinking. This aspect is undoubtedly the most durable merit of Muslim influence, as illustrated by the administration of justice. Until the Crusades, legal procedure in the West consisted of "God's judgments" by boiling water or by duel, or by "ordeal" during which people were burnt with red-hot irons or boiling oil and, if they survived, declared "not guilty." In contrast, we have only to quote the instructions given by Omar in the seventh century to the Muslim judges to show what a chasm separated the two conceptions: "Only decide on the basis of proof, be kind to the weak so that they can express themselves freely and without fear, deal on an equal footing with litigants by trying to reconcile them"[(3)].

Values, Simon & Schuster paperbacks, New York, p. 81). Why should peoples' lives be subjected to such arbitraries and inconsistencies?

(1) Will and Ariel (1968) *The Lessons of History*, Simon & Schuster, New York, p. 29.

(2) Boisard, Marcel A. (1980) On the Probable Influence of Islam on Western Public and International Law. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 430.

(3) *Ibid*: p. 440.

In fact, Joseph Strayer and Hans Gatzke, in their *Mainstream of Civilization*, went as far as to admit that "the West would not have developed a scientific tradition of its own as rapidly as it did without the assistance of Muslim scholarship, and quite possibly it never would have developed the tradition at all"[(1)].

Concerning the Sunnah

Without the Sunnah (basically, how the Prophet understood and applied the law), Islam would have taken on an entirely different configuration. Many portions of the Quran need the contextualized explanation of the Sunnah to yield their precise meaning. A frequent phrase expressing this meaning is, "The Sunnah is a decisive authority for determining the meaning of the text of the Quran"[(2)]. The Quran's succinctness is so compact to the extent that numerous and sometimes conflicting interpretations become unavoidable. In such a situation, the only reliable arbiter is not the thoughts of men or the mere appreciation of human reason but the Sunnah of the Prophet, the man to whom Allah has entrusted the task of delivering and clarifying the message of the Quran:

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(1) See O'Brien, Peter (1999) Islamic Civilization's Role in the Waning of the European Middle Ages, *The Medieval History Journal*; 2; 387. Historian S.P. Scott forthrightly relates the far-reaching influence from an unexpected angle:

"The impress of Arabian genius can be detected in the novels of Boccaccio, in the romances of Cervantes, in the philosophy of Voltaire, in the "Principia" of Newton, in the tragedies of Shakespeare. Its domain is coincident with the boundaries of modern civilization, its influence imperishable in its character" (Scott, S.P. (1904) *History of the Moorish Empire in Europe*, J. B. Lippincott Company, London, p. 14-15).

(2) Nyazee, Imran A. (2002) *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad*, The Other Press, p. 179.

"And We have sent down unto you (O Mohammed) the Thikr (The Reminder: Quran) so that you may explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought"[1].

"And We have not sent down the Book to you except that you may clearly explain to them those things in which they differ, and (as) a guidance and mercy for those who believe"[2].

When the prophet warned his *Ummah* (worldwide Muslim community) against their enemies, future tribulations, and the dangers of schism, he never left them without the proper remedy. He fervently advised:

"He amongst you who lives long will see great controversy, so beware of newly invented matters because they are misguidance and hold on to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs after me, cling onto that with your molar teeth!"[3].

Imam Maalik[4], well aware of the vital role of the Sunnah, is reported to have said, "The Sunnah is like the Ark of Noah. Whoever boards it will be saved and whoever stays behind will drown"[5].

It is worth noting that 'Sunnah' and 'Tradition' are not synonymous in the Islamic parlance, and therefore not interchangeable. Recent writings, however, seem to overlook a substantial difference between them. 'Tradition' is a loaded term which may include the Sunnah as a religious legacy, but seriously falls short of demarcating 'authentic' knowledge from

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[1] Quran: 16:44.
[2] Quran: 16:64.
[3] *Abu-Dawood*, No. 4607.
[4] Born 712 and died 795, one of the most prominent scholars of early Islam. Well-known for authoring *Al-Muwatta*, the earliest attempt to compile and authenticate the traditions of the Prophet. Imam Shafi'ee lauded his work as the most authentic book on earth because he spent 40 years in the collection and verification of traditions included therein.
[5] Ibn Taimiyyah, Shaikhul-Islam (2002) *Al-Fataawaa*, Vol. 4, p. 57.

the cultural by-products of tradition such as legends, myths, local customs, and pseudo religiosity. "Tradition", explains Alan Davies is "an ambiguous concept, both because traditions are always defined by later ages and because, once established, a tradition is soon reified into an orthodoxy, losing its original freshness and innovative capacity"[(1)].

Conversely, the main function of the Sunnah is to prevent tradition from overruling both the sovereignty of the Quran and the legal authority of the Prophet. The scholars who competently preserved the Sunnah are known as *Ahlul-Hadith* or the Hadith Folk. "These", praises Christopher Melchert "were the Muslims who elaborated and transmitted the revealed law and thought that the law, more than custom, good taste, personal experience, or anything else, should mould the lives of the faithful"[(2)].

Hadith compliers such as Mohammad Al-Bukhari, Muslim Al-Naisaboori, Mohammed Attirmithi, and Ahmed Bin Hanbal spent their lives collecting and refining the legacy of the Prophet, and they did so with unremitting scrupulousness. The notable critics of narration such as Yahya Bin Ma'een, Abdurrhaman Bin Mahdi, Abu Zur'aah Al-Razi, Abu Hattim Al-Razi, and a legion of other critics, performed another job. They sifted out the authentic hadiths from the large collection of narrations attributed to the Prophet.

The need to revive and document the authentic Sunnah arose about two centuries after the demise of the Prophet, when the purity of the Sunnah became threatened. In that era, the Muslim community produced individuals of reputed integrity, outstanding memory skills, and assiduous analytical expertise. They were individuals who, for the first time in

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(1) Davies, Alan (1999) Tradition and Modernity in Protestant Christianity. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 34; 19, p. 20.

(2) Melchert, Christopher (2002) The Piety of the Hadith Folk, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3. (Aug.), p. 425.

history, laid the foundations of the most rigorous and methodical historiography, known as the science of Hadith (*I'lmul Hadith*), or the science of the foundations of narration (*I'lmu Usulu Riwa-yah*). With this practical tool in their hands they succeeded in distinguishing the real words of the Messenger from those corrupted by weak transmitters (*Du'faa'*), imprecise narrators (*Mukhti'un*), or fabricated by forgers (*Wadha'un*)[1]. It is by virtue of these tremendous efforts that we now possess a rich and honest documentation of the Prophet's teachings known as the Sunnah[2].

This core collection of authentic hadiths is what scholars call *'Ahadith Mahfuthah*', meaning 'Preserved Hadiths', and these hadiths form the touchstone against which the mass of other hadiths is rubbed and tested for their genuineness. The task of examining unpopular hadiths in juxtaposition to 'preserved' ones is technically known as *I'tibaar*; that is examining the reliability of a text in the light of a more authentic text relating a similar content and sometimes reported with a similar *Isnad* (chain of narrators)[3].

The religious integrity that permeated through the character of Hadith scholars has heightened their sensitivity

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[1] Hasan, S. (1996) *An Introduction to the Science of Hadith*, Darussalam Publishers, p.8.

[2] For a detailed contemporary study on the science of Hadith the reader may refer to Mohammad Hashim (2005) *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification, and Criticism of Hadith*. Landmark studies of past authorities include those of Al-Ramahurmuzi, Al-Khateebul Baghdadi, Abu Amro Ibn-Salah, Al-Iraaqi, Ibn-Rajab Al-Hanbali, Assakhawi, and Ibn-Hajar Al Asqalaani.

[3] The existence of an 'authentic core' is not a one-party claim. Notable western scholars, such as the British expert Noel J. Coulson and others, were led by their research to believe in the existence of an 'authentic core' that preserved the substance of the actions and words of the Prophet. Despite this fact, some western scholars, such as the Swiss catholic priest Hans Küng, appear gratuitously indifferent to the significance of Coulson's substantiated conclusion. See Küng, Hans (2007) *Islam: Past, Present, and Future*, Oxford, Translated by John Bowden, p. 267.

to insidious subjective inclinations and urged them to exercise extra self-scrutiny. In this regard, Ruth Stellhorn Mackensen wrote:

"Among the devout there seems to have been a quite sincere feeling that the desire to write books was based on sinful pride, and they sought to avoid the appearance of producing anything which might detract from the unique position of the Koran. This applied to the writing of traditions more than to any other type of literature, probably owing in part to the fact that traditions contained words of the Prophet, which might easily be regarded as of equal interest and authority with those of the sacred book. This attitude continued far down in the history of Moslem literature"[1].

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[1] Mackensen, Ruth S. (1936) Arabic Books and Libraries in the Umaiyad Period, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Jul.), p. 253, Published by The University of Chicago Press. Allow me to digress for a moment here. David Hume (1711 -1776) in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* attempted to spell out a methodology for criticizing narrated traditions which, many centuries before Hume was born, has been thoroughly developed by early Muslim Sunni scholars of Hadith. Hume, for instance, emphasized the need to investigate possible contradictions among the testimonies of eyewitnesses, the need to scrutinize their integrity, making sure whether such eyewitnesses (or broadly 'relaters') had an interest in what they report, or whether such relaters were prone to narrate prodigies and events which starkly contradicted reason. In fact, Hume articulates a ruling which has long been held by Hadith scholars as a maxim. He says, "A man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villainy, has no manner of authority with us". All these parameters and much more have been discussed in great detail by the prominent scholar Abū 'Amr ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (1181-1245) in his seminal work *Introduction to the Science of Hadith*.

Islam, Modernity, Postmodernism, and Democracy

One salient feature of Islam is its clarity, simplicity, and straightforwardness. In the Quran, the word 'clear' paired with nouns such as 'signs', 'matter', 'guidance', and 'limits', or mentioned alone with other derivations, is reiterated more than 500 times. The Prophet too admired transparency, simplicity, serenity and disliked vagueness, double-standards, and occult dealings. No wonder Islam would prove hostile to the hazy character of postmodern thought. Ernest Gellner, the social anthropologist, explains where postmodernism is most deficient:

"Postmodernism is a contemporary movement. It is strong and fashionable. Over and above this, it is not altogether clear what the devil it is. In fact, clarity is not conspicuous amongst its marked attributes. It not only generally fails to practice it, but also on occasion actually repudiates it"[(1)].

Or as Garry Potter diagnoses, "the ideas associated with postmodernism are too loose and ill-defined for it even to be said to exist as a definite school of thought"[(2)].

Particularly in the West, there is the mistaken view that where there is Islamic law in action there is clerical authoritarianism[(3)]. This misconception can be corrected at

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(1) Gellner, Ernest (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Routledge, London & New York, p. 22-23.
Anthony C. Thiselton cites Norman Denzin who views postmodernism as signalling "a loss of trust in the capacity of the self to control its destiny, with concomitant byproducts of anger, alienation, anxiety . . . racism and sexism" (Thiselton, Anthony C. (2002) *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, Oneworld Publications, p. 233).

(2) Potter, G. (2000) *The Philosophy of Social Science: New Perspectives*, Peasron Education, p. 163.

(3) Western media and academia often confuse two different ideas: Islam as an 'ideal type', to use Max Weber's term, and the artificial Islam produced by local culture and ethnic interests.

least by understanding the role of the ruler in an Islamic state. Charles Eaton clarifies this point for us:

"The function of the ruler (or 'government' as such) within this system is strictly limited. Islamic society is *theocentric*[1] rather than *theocratic*. Were it the latter, there would be a need for a semi-divine ruler, the representative of God on earth and the interpreter of His will; but in the context of a theocentric society the ruler occupies a peripheral rather than a central role"[2].

Analyzing the socio-political structure in Islam, Earnest Gellner acknowledges that one "striking and important feature of Islam is the theoretical absence of clergy. No distinct sacramental status separates the preacher or the leader of the ritual from the laity. Such a person is naturally expected to be more competent, above all in learning, but he is not a different kind of social being. Formally, there is no clerical organization. Muslim theology is in this sense egalitarian. Believers are equidistant from God"[3].

Having said this, some may wonder whether Islam is compatible with modernity. To begin with, Islam is not hostile to the atmosphere of modernity. What is generally perceived as antagonism between Islam and modernity is largely due to factors irrelevant to Islam per se. Some Arab/Islamic countries, due to western colonialism, autocratic governorship, and debilitating local traditions, do exhibit real inconsistencies with modernity, but Islam in its own right necessarily does not. Earnest Gellner, the British anthropologist, closely examined the relationship between Islam and modernity. The incompatibilities he found counted as peripheral. "On the

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(1) In a theocentric system: Allah is the focal point of thoughts, interests, and desires.

(2) Eaton, Charles L. (1985) *Islam and the Destiny of Man*, The Islamic Texts Society/George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, p. 164.

(3) Gellner, Ernest (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, Routledge, London & New York, p. 8.

evidence available so far", says Gellner "the world of Islam demonstrates that it is possible to run a modern, or at any rate modernizing, economy, reasonably permeated by the appropriate technological, educational, organization principles, *and* combine it with a strong, pervasive, powerfully internalized Muslim conviction and identification"[(1)].

In Islam, the relationship between worship and daily life affairs is an informative and complementary one. Material needs sustain the individual to perform his moral-spiritual duties while worship permeates the individual's life with meaning and significance. This had an outreaching impact on the way early Muslims approached life and the sciences. The symbiotic relationship between Islam and worldly activity enabled the Muslims to initiate a robust empiricism which later underpinned latter-day modernity. In recognition of this fact, Karen Armstrong wrote:

"Indeed, it was the most rational and advanced of all the confessional faiths. Its strict monotheism had liberated humanity from mythology, and the Quran urged Muslims to observe nature closely, reflect upon their observations, and subject their actions to constant scrutiny. Thus the empirical spirit that had given birth to modernity had in fact originated in Islam"[(2)].

However, Islam disapproves of extremes and upholds the principle of *Wasatayiah*, moderation. One of the major fears arising from immoderate modernization is the *civilizational complexity dilemma* where more progress generates more complex problems while the minds responsible for generating them become increasingly inept for solving them. Ineptness, however, is not only the result of the psychophysical limitations of man but also the result of the escalating "disproportion", remarks José Ortega "between the complex

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(1) Gellner, Earnest (2001) *Postmodernism, Reason, and Religion*, p. 5.
(2) Armstrong, Karen (2004) *Islam: A Short History*, Phoenix, p. 132.

subtlety of the problems and the minds that should study them"[1].

Modernization therefore must not become an end in itself[2]. Material progress and aesthetic endeavours are fully encouraged when approached in moderation and as a means to a higher goal, which is that of doing good to gain everlasting reward in the Afterlife. "In Islamic parlance", wrote Huston "to be a slave to Allah is to be freed from other forms of slavery—ones that are degrading, such as slavery to greed, or to anxiety, or to the desire"[3]. Modernization must not be allowed to demoralize society at any cost. Otherwise, we would end up with a devastating anomie. John E. Boodin warned in 1915:

"Of what avail is our great industry, with its magnificent machinery, if we become slaves of our own tools and reduce human beings to a sordid and unhappy existence? Of what use are all our culture and wealth if we are going to be the prey of our primitive and selfish impulses?"[4]

What about democracy? Is it compatible with Islam? Like modernity, Islam is not entirely hostile to the tenets of democracy, and when we say 'not entirely' an exception is implied. Islam encourages freedom but not absolute freedom, liberty but not libertinism, and equality but not complete

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[1] Ortega, José (1932) *The Revolt of the Masses*, New York, p. 90.

[2] Jürgen Habermas observed modern societies' increased dependence on 'instrumental reason', a form of thinking which only focuses on "calculating the best ways of getting something", hence promoting an attitude of competition and possessiveness among society members. Societies plagued with such form of reasoning tend to disregard the (ultimate) moral and ethical worth of actions. Modern management theories, I have personally noticed, have played a very strong role in promoting instrumental reason on an institutional level. (See Outhwaite, William (2008) Jurgen Habermas. In *Key Sociological Thinkers*, 2nd Edition, edited by Rob Stones, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 252).

[3] Smith, Huston (2001) *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, p. 40.

[4] Boodin, John E. (1915) *The Function of Religion*. The Biblical World, Vol. 46, No. 2, (Aug.), p. 73, The University of Chicago Press.

abolishment of differences. What does this mean? Although Islam promotes any positive ideal, whether preached by democracy or contained in any other system, it defines the limits to such ideals under the principle of 'moderation' discussed earlier. Under Islamic law, the solution to strict authoritarianism is not to grant the people unbounded freedom[(1)]; the solution to communist feudalism is not to grant the people a spoiling capitalism; the solution to harsh monasticism is not to open the gates wide to same-sex marriage, bestiality, gambling, and alcohol. Upon close observation, these were never thought out solutions from the outset. Rather, they were the result of a series of extreme backlashes across Western history, eventually spawning the seeds of ideologies which looked down on anything from the past.

To many postmodernists, anything from the past is not only irrelevant and obsolete but also inimical to so-called progress, freethinking, and disturbing to the comfort zone of libertarian liberalism. This contempt for the past developed from the wretched conflicts with the church and the (false)[(2)] Darwinian view that life was ever-evolving towards perfection. The latter is not only scientifically groundless but also an ungrateful gesture to past generations who were responsible for establishing the foundations of many of our contemporary

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(1) There is, however, no unanimous agreement among sociologists and political ideologists on the pros and cons of authoritarianism, in all of both its implicit and explicit manifestations. This is readily observed from their disagreement as to what makes democracy and whether liberalism should be left without surveillance. Jürgen Habermas, the German sociologist, views the need for emancipation as the ultimate motive – though sometimes latent - behind all human activity. But he fails to convince us of the true limits of such emancipation, its consequences, and ultimate purpose. In Islam, people must struggle to emancipate themselves from enslavement to any being or object inferior to Allah - in which case everything is inferior to Him - and subject their entire being to the law of the Creator.

(2) I have addressed the 'progress to perfection' fallacy earlier in this book.

achievements. Let us not forget Isaac Newton's appreciative phrase: "If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants".

To wrap up, let us summarize Islam's position towards democracy by first signifying where they differ and second by showing where they meet. The most curial difference between Islam and western democracy is that they occupy two incompatible frames of reference. The source of truth in Islam is Allah, who is both the Creator and Ultimate Legislator. The truth about freedom, equality, and what is good or evil does not rest with people but rests with Allah, the All-Wise and All-Knowing. Yet in secular democracy, man is the ultimate lawmaker and truth resides in the people. In Islam, the Quran and the exposition of the prophet are the two main sources of the constitution.

Under democracy, on the other hand, sovereignty is handed to the people; they formulate the constitution and, consequently, everything is possible as long as it satisfies the taste of the majority. In democracy, as pointed out by Loren J. Samons, "whatever choices appear most free will seem most likely to produce happiness, and therefore will exercise a powerful pull on individual minds and hearts, with little consideration of their effects on others within the society or the chooser‘s own character or soul. Thus social ills like divorce, family abandonment, and abortion[1], which can be characterized as choices expressing the freedom of the

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[1] One may add the wide social gap between the rich and poor created by greedy capitalist tycoons. In the recent global economy crisis, capitalistic countries had to cut down heavily on astronomical interest rates that have so long burdened the middle class and squashed the poor to the margins of insufficiency. Under liberal capitalistic democracy, the rich are the sole proprietors of wealth – not Allah - and the needy have no claim whatsoever on that wealth. Over time, wealth is amassed in the hands of selfish elites while the rest of society not only remain indebted to the elites but also fettered to their long-term interests.

individual, are not only tolerated but sometimes actually encouraged, even if subtly"[1].

To conclude this part, I quote William Zartman who cites the example of 'open debate' to underscore where Islam and democracy diverge. He says:

"It should be remembered that the position of democracy and that of political Islam on the matter of open debate are similar but different in an important way. Both maintain that truth will prevail in open debate, but democrats are proponents of the debate whereas Islamicists are proponents of the Truth"[2].

Let us now see where Islam and democracy meet. First of all, let us clarify the primary goal of democracy and skip the single treatment of political vocabulary which is often misleading when discussed fragmentarily and out of context. The primary goal of democracy is "preventing the abuse of power through a systematic control of government and a balance of power"[3]. In reality, this very goal constitutes a key Islamic concern[4]. In the Islamic community, all people are entitled to participate constructively in designating and reforming the governing body. In order to achieve this, Islam employs highly democratic instruments such as *Shura* (consultation), *Jadal Bil-Ahasan* (fair debate), *Bay'ah* (renewal of office/contract between the people and the leader), *Ijmaa'* (consensus), *Ijtihad* (jurisdictional/jurisprudential reasoning), *Naseehah* (advice), *Huquq* (rights), *Mas'uliyah* (responsibility), *Muhasabiyah* (accountability), and *A'dl* (justice).

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(1) Samons, Loren J. (2004) *What's Wrong with Democracy? From Athenian Practice to American Worship*, University of California Press, London, (edit.), p. 182.

(2) Zartman, W. (1992) Democracy and Islam: The Cultural Dialectic. In *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 524, Political Islam, (Nov.), p. 189.

(3) Hoffmann, M. (2001) *Religion on the Rise*, p. 92.

(4) *Ibid*.

Islam spells out the core values and the major political precepts, yet demands that the means to realizing them should be lawful, or in Islamic phraseology: *La-Dharar Wa-la Dhirar*, preventing the possibility of reciprocal harm. President, prime minister, ruler, king, caliph, emperor etc, all these are mere titles and what really counts is whether the one in charge is ready to actualize political justice, social well-being, and enable the growth of a healthy pluralistic environment under the umbrella of Islamic law.

When Abu Bakr, the first Caliph in Islam, was elected to office, he addressed his subjects: "If I behave well, support me, if I falter straighten me". When Omar IBnul-Khattab succeeded Abu Bakr, he asked the people, " Those of you who see in me crookedness must straighten it", a man from the audience stood up and replied, " By God, if we see in you crookedness, we will straighten it with our swords ", in an allusion to their seriousness in reforming the ruler. Omar then said, "Thank God that He has created among the community of Mohammad someone who can straighten Omar with his sword!"[(1)].

[(1)] Zaidan, AbdulKarim (1983) *Individual and the State*, International Islamic Federation, p. 46. Caliph Omar is also remembered for the reprimanding phrase, "When did you allow yourself to subjugate people after they had been born free?"

HIDDEN FACTS & DETERRENT FACTORS

The Road Not Taken

> "Let it be ungrudgingly admitted that some reform was needed when Muhammad appeared, and a thousand times better than the Judaism or Christianity of his day and of his country was the faith he promulgated".
>
> (T. Witton Davies)[1]

"The Road Not Taken" is the title of a poem by a famous American poet named Robert Frost. The poem alludes to the importance of personal judgment and stresses the significance of choice, but on basis of objective thinking and good reasoning.

The poem describes the human dilemma when faced with the duality of two critical options. From another perspective, it shows how uncalculated decisions can cost one his entire happiness and underscores the importance of estimating the consequences of our actions before deciding to stride forth. The poem goes like this:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

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[1] T. Witton Davies (1896) Islam: A Sketch with Bibliography, *The Biblical World*, Vol. 8, No. 5, p. 345.

And both that morning equally lay
In all leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh! I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference[1].

I believe that Islam is one of those roads not taken by many people. In many cases, some find it hard to abandon the way of the masses, partly because we are apt to think that a majority will never err or take the wrong road. After all, "only dead fish swim with the stream"[2] says one adage.

Indeed, the road which many people take may not be the right one for us. Why not give "the road less travelled by" a try? It may make all the difference. However, several obstacles stand in the way of many truth-seekers. Two kinds of obstacles stand out: one is internal and has to do with the openness and awareness of the reader, and to this I have dedicated most of the book; the other has to do with external influences, mainly the systematic attempts, whether out of ill-will or ignorance, to mar the attractive message of Islam. It is beyond the scope of this book to vindicate Islam from all the allegations levelled against it. Ironic indeed is the correlation between the never-ending list of hearsays targeting Islam and the ever-growing number of people entering its fold[3].

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[1] *Traditions in Literature*, Classic Edition, United States, 1988, p. 310.
[2] Templar, Richard (2006) *The Rules of Life*, Pearson, p. 22.
[3] Recently, Frederick Quinn wrote *The Sum of All Heresies: The Image of Islam in Western Thought*. In his summing up, he (interestingly) maintained that "the negative image of Islam appeared early in

When Islam is mentioned to some non-Muslims, the first image that jumps to their minds is a building with two minarets stretching high on both sides and Muslims performing prayers in unison. Those who are more familiar with the religion may recall other images: the holy sites of Makkah and Medina, bearded men, and women wearing the Hijaab. The good thing about these images is that they're free of prejudice. The bad thing is that they're awfully reductionistic and superficial.

What is really galling is the ease with which many demonizing hearsays have made their way into the minds of many people. Sometimes Islam is perceived as 'the cradle of terrorism', 'the religion of extremism', 'misogyny', and 'strict asceticism'. Misreading grew worse following the 9/11 tragic events, which in turn seemed to endorse all the preconceived western notions "that Islam was a fanatical faith that encourages murder and terror"[(1)]. Since then, Islam has been gullibly believed to be nothing but a traditional holdover, anti-western, and often as merely militant and extremist [(2)]. Paul Findley, a member of congress for more than 22 years, attributes these harmful generalizations to ~~b~~biased and

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Europe's history, even before the Prophet's birth". Quinn's explanation was that "as early as Greek and Roman times, Westerners partially defined themselves by seeing themselves in opposition to the roving bands of armed, unknown tribesmen on Asia's frontiers. This created a self-perceived division between liberty-loving "civilized" Europeans and despotic "barbarian" strangers". "The Bible", added Quinn "became the great anti-Islamic text, although it was compiled centuries before the Prophet's birth and never mentioned Muslims" (Quinn, Frederick (2008) *The Sum of All Heresies: The Image of Islam in Western Thought*, Oxford University Press, p. 160).

(1) Armstrong, Karen (2004) *Mohammed*, Phoenix, p. 12. On the other hand, analysts report that the 'campaign against terrorism' has multiplied the number of converts to Islam (*The New York Times*, July 19, 2004).

(2) Douglass S. & Dunn, R. (2003) Interpreting Islam in American Schools, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588, Islam: Enduring Myths and Changing Realities, p 70).

insensitive treatment in the media"[1] while Maurice Bucaille, the French writer, ascribes the Western backlash to "ignorance and systematic denigration"[2]. Findley reminds the Western audience of the fact that, "no one's history is spotless, but historians may discover that Muslim laundry has the least stains"[3].

In a similar vein writes the prolific Karen Armstrong:

"It was widely assumed that there was something in the religion of Islam that impelled (some) Muslims to cruelty and violence, and the media all too frequently encouraged this assumption"[4].

Micheal Parenti, regarded by some as America's most astute political analyst, explains how Western media is most likely to define a typical Arab:

"Many of us never met an Arab, but few of us lack some picture in our mind of what an Arab is supposed to be like. If drawn largely from the mass media, this image will be a stereotype, and most likely a defamatory one. As Walter Lippmann noted almost seventy years ago in his book *Public Opinion*, stereotypic thinking "precedes reason" and as a form of perception]it[imposes a certain character on the data of our senses"[5].

Parenti warns his people against the hidden agenda of fear mongering:

"…if we have "learned" from motion pictures and television series that our nation is forever threatened by hostile

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(1) Findley, Paul (2001) *Silent No More*, amana publications, United States p.288. Michael Parenti, America's political analyst, explains the insidious influence of media indoctrination: "The more time people spend watching television and movies, the more their impressions of the world seem to resemble those of the media" (Parenti, Michael (1998) *America Besieged*, City Lights Books, p. 188).

(2) Bucaille, Maurice (undated) *The Bible The* Quran *And Science*, Kazi Publications, Lahore, p. 110.

(3) *Ibid*: p. 275.

(4) Armstrong, Karen (2004) *Islam*, Phoenix, p. 160.

(5) Parenti, Michael (1998) *America Besieged*, p.186.

alien forces, then we are apt to support increased military spending and warlike interventions"[1].

Hence, Armstrong gravely admonishes:

"To cultivate a distorted image of Islam, to see it as inherently the enemy of democracy, and decent values, and to revert to the bigoted views of medieval Crusaders would be a catastrophe"[2].

"Mistakes begin with its very name", writes Huston who adds:

"Until recently it (Islam) was called Muhammadanism by the West, which is not only inaccurate but offensive. It is inaccurate...because Muhammad didn‘t create this religion; God did—Muhammad was merely God‘s mouthpiece. Beyond this, the title is offensive because it conveys the impression that Islam focuses on a man rather than on God. To name Christianity after Christ is appropriate, they say, for Christians believe that Christ was God. But to call Islam Muhammadanism is like calling Christianity St. Paulism. The proper name of this religion is Islam"[3]

The fallacy that Muslims spread their faith at the tip of the sword originally grew in the womb of early Orientalism and was later nurtured by zealous Christian writers[4]. Thomas Arnold disillusions the gullible populace:

"The spread of the faith over so vast a portion of the globe is due to various causes social, political, and religious: but

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[1] *Ibid*: p. 187.

[2] *Ibid*: 161.

[3] Smith, Huston (2001) *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, p. 2.

[4] To name only a few, works dedicated to demonizing Islam and Muslims, are those of G.M.Draycott (1916) *Mahomet* (sic) *the Founder of Islam*, Samuel M. Zwemer (1916) *The Disintegration of Islam*, and W.H.T. Gairdner (1920) *The Rebuke of Islam*. The thirteenth-century Crusader and polemicist Oliver of Paderborn claimed:" Islam began by the sword, was maintained by the sword, and by the sword would be ended" (A. Gerges, Fawaz (1997) Islam and the Muslims in the Mind of America: Influences on the Making of U.S. Policy. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, V.26, No.2, p. 68).

among these, one of the most powerful factors at work in the production of this stupendous result, has been the unremitted labors of Muslim missionaries, who, with the Prophet himself as their ensample, have spent themselves for the conversion of unbelievers"[1].

But this is not to assume that Islam is a religion of defencelessness and defeatism, teaching its adherents acquiescence to oppression. There were times in history where Islam did use the sword, but not for converting people to faith by force[2]. The sword was used to protect Islamic territories and, whenever necessary, as a pre-emptive measure to thwart nearby threats. When Islam had just begun to flourish, potential enemies had to be confronted. However, whenever Muslim armies conquered new lands, the indigenous people were granted rights and privileges undreamed of under the old ruling system. Not only were the new subjects entitled to complete protection, but were also allowed flexible mobility, trade, and freedom of faith[3]; the Jews and Christians under the reign of Muslim Spain set an example.

The word 'Jihad', wrongly associated with the act of arbitrary violence, is a bogyman used by irresponsible media to turn people away from Islam. Again, Paul Findley demystifies:

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[1] Arnold, Thomas (2002) *The Spread of Islam in the World*, Goodword Books, New Delhi, p.3.

[2] It should be noted that the Prophet was always ready to promote a policy of détente with his adversaries, as he did in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah (628 C.E). The peaceful and bloodless climate that consequently followed enabled hundreds of people to learn about Islam and embrace the faith.

[3] In contrast, Thomas Arnold relates the case of King Olaf Trygvesson "who either slew those who refused to accept Christianity, or cut off their hands or feet, or drove them into banishment and in this manner spread the Christian faith throughout the whole of Viken (southern part of Norway)". (Arnold, Thomas (2002) *The Spread of Islam in the World*, Goodword Books, New Delhi, p.8).

"Jihad has two meanings: one, non-violent struggle within oneself for a life of virtue; the other, fighting for justice, a supreme goal in Islamic teachings"[1].

The Muslim Woman

Thoughtless claims about the status of women in Islam have served as prime fodder for uncritical writers and biased media[2]. Let us start with the myths concerning the *Hijab*, the Muslim woman's dress-code. Having experienced the transition between two dissimilar cultures, Muslim women in the West, who have worn the veil out of religious obedience, are ideally placed to explain the moral and social benefits of the *Hijab*. First of all, these *Daughters of another Path*[3] are agreed that many Western women have come to be treated as sex objects through constant pressure to undress or dress more provocatively.

Second, they believe - and have certainly experienced - that by dressing decently, the Muslim woman asserts her dignity as a wife reserved for her husband and not as someone appearing to show interest in extramarital affairs[4]. Concerning the outrageous wantonness ubiquitous in many modern societies, Geoffrey Robertson had once advised:

"Much of the leering salacity dispensed on the street corners will prove unacceptable when society becomes more genuinely concerned to uphold the dignity of women"[5].

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(1) Findley, Paul (2001) *Silent No More*, United States, p. 296.
(2) Nick Compton carried out a survey on which he reported:
"What is striking about this stream of converts to Islam is that the majority seem to be women". Compton, after interviewing many female converts, concludes, "Certainly, all the women I spoke to were quick to refute the idea that Islam imposes a women-know-thy-place ideology". (Soul-Searching Leads Young Briton to Islam (2). *Saudi Gazette*. April, 14, 2008, p. 5,)
(3) Title of a book by Carrol L. Anway, an American convert to Islam.
(4) Hoffmann, M. (1999) *Islam the Alternative*, p. 57.
(5) Harris, Phil (1997) *An Introduction to Law*, London, p. 53.

The other myth depicts Muslim women as second-class citizens, oppressed, and deprived of basic human rights. Frequently raised objections are those relating to women's allegedly unfair share from inheritance and their being treated inferiorly in judicial matters, namely equating the witness of two females with that of one male and preventing them from occupying juristic positions.

Concerning inheritance, many cases may occur where males and females receive equal shares of inheritance, such as when the deceased leaves behind (maternal) half brothers and sisters. Scholars are unanimous that each should receive a sixth share of the bequeathed wealth. The legal status of females is also acknowledged in many cases, especially those relating to midwifing, ascertaining the lineage of babies, child rearing and similar instances. They are also allowed to exercise legal power as witnesses in financial/transactional issues particularly when no male witnesses are available. This should be understood within the social and jurisprudential framework of Islamic law. Since males are the primary breadwinners, responsible for sustaining the family's livelihood, their involvement in financial dealings virtually recurs on a daily basis. Women are not entirely absent here but because of their role as caretakers, housewives, and mothers they are almost detached from outdoor vicissitudes and removed from the hustle and bustle of public life[1]. Hence, it is not because they are intrinsically inferior (that their legal capacity is narrowly acknowledged in transactional dealings and crime cases) but because they are hardly ever present in the world of men.

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[1] "Women who work in jobs they once found exciting and stimulating", observed Crittenden "often don't feel the same way after they give birth and are startled by how much they enjoy being mothers" (Crittenden, Danielle (1999) *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Women*, Simon & Schuster, New York, p. 136).

Nonetheless, the findings of modern research are in line with Islam's restricted view with regards to women's' legal capacity, both as witnesses and jurors. One study, for example, has shown that, in judicial contexts, female jurors are more bias than males in passing verdicts and more vulnerable to the physical attractiveness of litigants[1]. Those who judge women, out of common sense, as more emotionally charged and more likely to fall prey to sympathy than men may not be wrong after all. Daily experience is an important source of evidence[2].

Research also shows that, during menstrual cycle phases, women regularly experience serious psychological instabilities and increased memory loss[3]. "Complaints of memory loss were a part of the symptom complex of the menopause transition", state Gayatri Devi and her colleagues[4]. Other studies (Evans et al., 1998) have also revealed that "women with confirmed premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMS) experienced substantial changes in mood"[5]. More systematic

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[1] Wuensch, K & Charles, M (2004) Effects of Physical Attractiveness on Evaluations of a Male Employee's Allegation of Sexual Harassment by His Female Employer, *Journal of Social Psychology*, 144 (2), 207-217.

[2] Women are by their "very nature vehemently emotional, impressionable, and liable to digress from the real facts of the case in hand", says Muhammad Qutb who for this reason justifies that it is " a wise step to secure and preserve the genuine character of legal evidence in courts through all possible means and against all possible perversities irrespective of the fact whether the evidence is for or against the accused" (Qutb, M. (2009) *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*, New Delhi, p. 146)

[3] **It is no coincidence that** the Quran (2:282) refers to the possibility of erring through 'forgetfulness', and therefore encourages the combined witness of two women in order to minimize the chances of error and inaccuracy.

[4] Devi G. et al. (2005) Prevalence of Memory Loss Complaints and Other Symptoms Associated with the Menopause Transition: A Community Survey; *Gender Medicine*, Vol.2, No. 4, p. 256.

[5] Evans et al. (1998) Mood and Performance Changes in Women with Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder: Acute Effects of Alprazolam; *Neuropsychopharmachology*; Vol. 19, No. 6, p. 510.

studies have reported similar cognitive difficulties during and after pregnancy. Several women, for example, complained of ~~–m~~ental fogginess", confusion, disorientation, reading difficulties, and poor concentration (Brett & Baxendale, 2001)[1]. With these conditions, which regularly recur indefinitely, it would be risky, misleading, or even wrong to assume that women's' legal power (as witnesses, judges, or jurors) is as sober and impartial as that of men.

Since we have touched on the question of differences between males and females, we might want to know what science has to say concerning this issue. In addition to evidence from day-to-day experience[2], numerous studies have debunked the feminist claim that males and females exhibit no substantial differences with regards to thinking and behavior. Much of the evidence in this area interestingly comes from the field of evolutionary biopsychology. Drawing on the results of several studies (Broverman et al., 1968; Harris, 1978; Joseph, 1993, 1999; Kimura, 1993; Linn and Petersen, 1985; Thomas et al., 1973), neuropsychologist Rhawn Joseph showed that "human males excel over females

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[1] Brett, M. & Baxendale, S. (2001) Motherhood and Memory: a review, *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 26, p. 341- 342.

[2] An anthropologist and sociologist, Erving Goffman (1922-1982) is best known for his research on day-to-day social encounters. His lengthy and critical article *The Arrangement between the Sexes* effectively treated the deep sociobiological differences between males and females as manifested in (authentic) public life settings. Drawing on instances from daily life, he convincingly argues that without such differences, males and females would both cease to need each other and cease to act out of their true nature. In his own words, "the human nature imputed to the male causes him to be dependent on a female connection, and the reciprocal condition prevails for women. Who a male finds he needs if he is to act according to his nature is just who needs him so that she can act according to hers" (Goffman, Erving (1977) The Arrangement between the Sexes, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Autumn), p. 313).

across a variety of visual-spatial problem solving and perceptual tasks"[1].

The reason why I cite all of this is not to justify nor speak for some of the inequities of male dominance. The mere attempt to do so is immediately repudiated by the Quran. Rather, my intention is to reaffirm the fact that males and females enjoy different yet complementary qualities and to completely abolish them is to pervert the natural ecology of human sexuality.

We may end this discussion with Jane I. Smith, Associate Director of Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions and Associate Professor at Harvard Divinity School, who studied the status of women in Islam and came to the conclusion that:

"Islam provides women a position of honor and respect, with clearly stated rights and obligations. The Quran affords legal protections in the areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance that are considered to mark a vast improvement over the situation of women in pre-Islamic society. Nonetheless, historical circumstances through the centuries have often worked to the disfavor of the Muslim woman; predominant traditions of male authority and honor have made it difficult for women to avail themselves of the rights guaranteed by the Quran"[2].

John Esposito, a world expert in Islamic studies, similarly acknowledges:

"The revelation of Islam raised the status of women by prohibiting female infanticide, abolishing women's status as property, establishing women's legal capacity, granting women

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[1] Joseph, R. (2000) The Evolution of Sex Differences in Language, Sexuality, and Visual Spatial Skills. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 29, 35-66.

[2] Smith, Jane I. (1978) Women in Islam: Equity, Equality, and the Search for the Natural Order, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* XLVII/4, p. 517.

the right to receive their own dowry, changing marriage from a proprietary to a contractual relationship, and allowing women to retain control over their property[1] and use their maiden name after marriage. The Quran also granted women financial maintenance from their husbands and controlled the husband's free ability to divorce. The Quran declares that men and women are equal in the eyes of God; man and woman were created to be equal parts of a pair (51:49). The Quran describes the relationship between men and women as one of "love and mercy" (30:21). Men and women are to be like "members of one another" (3:195), like each other's garment (2:187)"[2].

Finally, it might be worthwhile to throw light on the mechanism through which many of the widespread

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[1] Compare with John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) account of the status of wives at his time. He observed that "she (the wife) can acquire no property but for him (the husband); the instant it becomes hers, even if by inheritance, it becomes *ipso facto* his. In this respect the wife's position under the common law of England is worse than that of slaves in the laws of many countries". (Mill, J. S. (2001) *The Subjection of Women*, e-book edition, p. 45)

[2] Esposito, John L (2002) *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, Oxford University Press, p. 89.

The restless feminist campaign for sexual equality has left many men, especially in the west, so vulnerable and insecure as to cast doubt on the meaning of masculinity and whether it really made any difference to be classified as a male. The result is an increasing emasculation (Bob: 2002, p. 166) which has no doubt disturbed the natural equilibrium of human sexuality. Sheila Jeffreys supplies a snapshot of the situation in the west:

"Men's problems in adapting to women's greater equality are clear from the invigoration of the sex industry. Research on sex tourism shows that the men see their sexual access to obviously unequal unempowered women as a compensation for the dominance they feel they have lost over women in the west (O'Connell Davidson, 1995). Mail order bride company websites offer western men obedient and humble women from countries like Russia and the Philippines where dire poverty can command deference". (Jeffreys: 2005, p. 173)

See: Pease, Bob (2002) (Re) Constructing Men's Interests. *Journal of Men and Masculinities*, No. 5, p. 166; Jeffreys, Sheila (2005) *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, New York, p. 173.

misconceptions (about Islam) are being reified. We may refer to Susan Douglass and Ross Dunn's scholarly article *Interpreting Islam in American Schools* wherein they conclude:

"Stereotypes and misrepresentations of Islam have been deeply ingrained in American culture. Just as the legacy of slavery has shaped popular images of Africa as a continent of heathen tribes and impenetrable jungles, so the western medieval and colonial heritage of hostility to Islam has underlain modern miseducation about Muslim society and history. In the mass media, cultural bias in coverage of the Muslim world has been so pervasive as to merit academic study…Consequently, the popular media's interpretation of Islam and the Muslim world has flowed freely into schoolrooms and then back out again to the wider public without being subjected to much critical analysis and correction"[(1)].

[(1)] Douglass, Susan & Dunn, Ross (2003) Interpreting Islam in American Schools**,** *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588, Islam: Enduring Myths and Changing Realities, p 53.

Towards Truth

"The sincere and loyal devotion to truth is a religious devotion and must forever press on to the meaning of the wholeness of things".

(John E. Boodin)[1]

"The secret of the might of Islam lies in the proportion of truth which it inculcates".

(Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall)[2]

In the Quran, two kinds of guidance are reiterated: **guidance to truth** and **guidance to accept truth**. We can guide people to truth and draw their attention to certain facts. Yet, we cannot open their hearts and guarantee their final decision, no matter how articulate, cogent, and self-explanatory our arguments may turn out to be. As mentioned in the Quran:

"Verily, We have sent down unto you the Book for mankind with truth. He, then, who accepts guidance benefits his own self, and he who strays injures his own self; and you (Mohammed) are not a guardian over them"[3].

"O mankind! Now truth has reached you from your Lord! Those who choose guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who go astray, do so to their own loss"[4].

Accepting the truth of Islam not only depends on the clarity

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[1] Boodin, John E. (1915) *The Function of Religion*. The Biblical World, Vol. 46, No. 2, (Aug.), (edit.), p. 68.
[2] *The Religion of the Crescent*, 1910, New York, p. 6.
[3] Quran: 39:41.
[4] Quran: 10:108

of evidence, but also on what individuals would like to make of themselves and the entirety of life. Those who value meaning, who sincerely cherish goodness, and think highly of themselves will have no difficulty understanding the purpose of existence:

> "Allah has created the heavens and the earth with truth: so that each soul may receive the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them will be wronged"[1].

> "Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: and your Lord is never unjust to His servants"[2].

In this world, there is enough uncertainty and ambiguity for desirers of disbelief to become disbelievers. Yet, this same world is so permeated with signs of truth and wisdom that no one in desire of belief may lose his way or fall short of evidence. It is part of Allah's infinite justice that each person will only open his eyes to what suits his or her attitude. If I am an admirer of disbelief, I will find enough falsehood to sustain my cynicism and self-deception. If I am an advocate of belief, I do not even need to set out in search of evidence for my own self, my very existence is the greatest evidence.

> "And on earth are signs for those who have true faith. And in yourselves, will you not then see?" [3].

Before drawing to a close, I would like to share with the reader an appreciation of the features characterizing the religion of the future. For this purpose, I quote Charles W. Eliot who, as early as 1909, far-sightedly surmised the nature

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[1] Quran: 45: 22.
[2] Quran: 41: 46
[3] Quran: 51: 21-22.

of the abiding faith. Having read the present book in its entirety and the quotes below, I hope the impartial reader will come to the realization that if there's one religion that perfectly fits Eliot's forthcoming description then that must be Islam. Eliot wrote:

"In the religion of the future there will be no personifications of the primitive forces of nature, such as light, fire, frost, wind, storm, and earthquake, although such personifications abound in primitive religions and the actual religions of barbarous or semi-civilized peoples.

…There will be in the religion of the future no worship, expressed or implied, of dead ancestors, teachers, or rulers; no more tribal, racial, or tutelary gods; no identification of any human being, however majestic in character, with the Eternal Deity.

…The religion of the future will not perpetuate the Hebrew anthropomorphic representations of God, conceptions which were carried in large measure into institutional Christianity. It will not think of God as an enlarged and glorified man, who walks "in the garden in the cool of the day"[(1)].

Dear truth seeker, believe in truth and truth will set you free. Concluding with Michael Novak's words:

"The one thing a free person is not free to do - unless in betrayal - is to turn his or her face against the evidence. The evidence binds, and makes us free from all else… our minds must be free from every coercion except one: the coercion effected upon the mind by evidence. The mind that is coerced by nothing but the evidence is free; the mind coerced by anything but truth is unfree"[(2)].

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(1) Eliot, Charles W. (1909) The Religion of the Future, *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (Oct.), p. 389-407; published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Harvard Divinity School.

(2) Novak, Michael (1997) Truth and Liberty: The Present Crisis in Our Culture, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1. (Winter), p. 22.

Verily, there has come to you
a proof from your Lord,
and We have sent down to you
a manifest light. So, as for those who
believed in Allah and held fast to Him,
He will admit them to His Mercy and
guide them to Himself through
a Straight Path.

(Quran: 4:174-175)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

A Very Short Biography of the Last Prophet

> "Muhammad's impact was revolutionary on every aspect of life it touched".
>
> (Felipe Ferncindez-Armesto) [1]

For Muslims, Mohammed's prophethood is beyond doubt. They firmly believe that he is the Messenger of Allah and through him Allah's divine past revelations were culminated and perfected, thus forming the final and universal message to humankind[2].

Despite the copious literature written on Mohammed's life, reality testifies to the fact that Mohammad is probably the most misunderstood personality in history. The misunderstandings are sometimes so prejudicial that one is perplexed as to whether they are the result of sheer ignorance, unabated enmity, or a mixture of both. We share this conclusion with William Montgomery who wrote:

"To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad"[3].

To give readers a clue, I cite G.W. Davis whose concept of Mohammad's prophethood typifies that of many 18th and 19th century western scholars. After a short – and obviously incomplete - survey of the life and mission of the Prophet, Davis hastens to supply a perfect example of historical misinformation:

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[1] Ferncindez-Armesto, Felipe (2001) *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*. The Free Press, New York, p. 330.
[2] Badawi, J. (1990) *Muhammad's Prophethood: An Analytical View*, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, KSA, p. 1.
[3] Watt, William M. (1953) *Mohammad at Mecca*, Oxford, p. 52.

"The diseased condition of Mohammed's nerves, shown in falling sickness, dyspepsia, etc., produced mental hallucinations, which, intensified by days of fasting, solitude, watching through the night and contemplation, gave rise to visions, in which he heard voices and saw spirits; and, because he thoroughly believed in the existence of the subjects of these hallucinations, it was a clear case of religious insanity. In spite of any misgivings, it was ever a settled thing in his mind that he was the prophet of God"[(1)].

If such was the truth about Mohammad, his message would have harbored all sorts of errors and nonsensicalities. What else should we expect from a hallucinating, sick, dyspeptic man? As Dr. Jamal Badawi puts it:

"It does not stand to reason to say that the book (the Quran), that caused a far-reaching spiritual, moral, social, economical, and political revolution that changed the course of history was the product of convulsive epileptic seizures! Nor does it stand reason to say that this book was a product of a simple and illiterate desert dweller"[(2)].

Compare G.W. Davis to George Bernard Shaw whose admiration of the Prophet is not only borne out by reality but also falls short of depicting both the immensity of his impact and the grandness of his character:

"I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ[(3)], he must be called the Savoir of

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(1) G. W. Davis (1890) Islam and the Kuran. *The Old and New Testament Student*, Vol. 10, No. 6, (Jun), p. 341.

(2) Badawi, J. (1990) *Muhammad's Prophethood: An Analytical View*, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, KSA, p. 1.

(3) Early Christian scholars, such as Eologio and Paul Alvaro, associated the rise of Islam with the advent of Antichrist, mentioned in the New Testament and whose reign would herald the Last Days of time (Armstrong, Karen (2004) *Mohammed*, Phoenix, p. 24). It is worth noting that Mohammad has also warned his companions and future generations against the *fitnah* (tribulation) of *Maseehu Dajjal* (Antichrist). According to an authentic Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim (No. 2945) and Tirmithi (No. 3930), the Prophet told that the

Humanity…I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today"[(1)].

Or compare with Lamartine's (1790-1869) often quoted eulogy:

"The most famous have only moved weapons, laws, empires; they founded, when they founded anything, only material powers, often crumbling before them. This one]Mohammad[not only moved armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, millions of men over a third of the inhabited globe; but he also moved ideas, beliefs, souls. He founded upon a book, of which each letter has become a law, a spiritual nationality embracing people of all languages and races; and made an indelible imprint upon this Muslim world, for the hatred of false gods and the passion for the God, One and Immaterial. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior conqueror of ideas, restorer of a rational dogma for a cult without imagery, founder of twenty earthly empires and of a spiritual empire, this is Mohammad. Of all the scales by which one measures human grandeur, which man has been greater?[(2)]

Antichrist's appearance, at the end of time, will set people fleeing into the mountains.

(1) Shaw, George B. (1936) *The Genuine Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 8.

(2) Lamartine, Alphonse Marie (1854) *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, Vol. 2, p. 276-77. Lamartine was a French poet and politician.

Mohammad: Birth and Characteristics

The Prophet was born in Makkah, around A.D. 570, within a tribe called *Quraish*. Islamic records trace his lineage back to Prophet Abraham, which Muslims call the Father of the Prophets. In his *Roudhatul Muhibbeen,* scholar Ibnul Qayim sheds light on the character of the Messenger of Allah as reported by his nearest companions:

—He was innocently bright and had broad countenance. His manners were fine. He had black attractive eyes finely arched by stretching eyebrows. His hair was glossy, black, and inclined to curl. His voice was extremely commanding. His head was large, well formed and set on a slender neck. His expression was pensive and contemplative, serene and sublime…his companions always surrounded him. Whenever he uttered something, those who are present would listen to him in rapt attention, and whenever he issued a command, they vied with each other in carrying it out. He was a master and commander. His utterances were marked by truth and sincerity, free from all kinds of falsehoods and lies"[(1)].

Mohammad was both Allah's Messenger and an ordinary human being who ate, drank, laughed, cried, walked around in markets and avenues, and sometimes helped his wife, A'ishah, with the usual domestic work. —We never read of Jesus laughing", wrote Armstrong "but we often find Mohammed smiling and teasing the people who were closest to him. We will see him playing with the children, having trouble with his wives, weeping when a friend dies and showing off his new baby son like any besotted father"[(2)].

By the age of forty, Mohammad received The Revelation from Allah. The message of the Quran reaffirmed the doctrine of *tawheed* and laid down the foundations of a universal

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(1) Ibnul-Qayim (1992) *Roudhatul Muhibbeen*, Vol. 1, p. 233-234.
(2) Armstrong, Karen (2004) *Mohammed*, Phoenix, p. 52.

comprehensive system. Gilbert Reid, appreciating Mohammad's large-scale reformation, acknowledges:

"Islam in the second place may be appreciated by the Christian because it was a great religious reformation[1]. What Sakyamuni did for Brahmanism Mohammad did both for Judaism and Christianity…Still more the truths proclaimed by God through all ages had been lost sight of amid the vain imaginings of men's hearts. The only hope was in a return to the great fundamental teachings of all time, that of only one God…the reformation of Mohammad was a return to the first and second commandments of the prophet Moses, which Jesus himself had equally taught"[2].

Early Prophecies and Prophethood

The Bible is believed to contain prophecies foretelling the advent of the Prophet Mohammad, most conspicuously in Deuteronomy 18:18, where God addresses Moses:

–I will raise up for them a Prophet like you form among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I My Self will call him to account"[3].

In this Biblical passage, a reference is made to the Israelites' –brothers", which in turn is a reference to their Ishmaelite cousins. Prophet Mohammad is a descendent of Ishmael the son of Abraham and this fact is necessary for understanding the identity of the future Prophet as recounted

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[1] Islam was a reformation and an abrogation of some aspects of the previous laws, yet it revived and established the doctrine of *tawheed*, belief in Allah's Oneness and worshipping none but He.

[2] Reid, Gilbert (1916) Islam, an Appreciation. *The Biblical World,* Vol. 48, No.1, p. 12.

[3] Deuteronomy 18:18-19 NIV: *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version*.

in Deuteronomy above. The passage then speaks of a similarity between Moses and the anticipated Prophet, who – as we'll see - effortlessly turns out to be Mohammad. The table below summarizes the most common features between the Prophets Moses and Mohammad:

Common features between Moses and Mohammad
Unlike Jesus, both were the offspring of normal birth
Unlike Jesus, both were sent with a comprehensive law
Unlike Jesus, both married and begot children
Held a staff (stick)
Unlike Jesus, both used to be shepherds
Physically strong and well built
Was an orphan
Faced similar hardships from people
Normal death
Were persecuted and had to migrate (Jesus never migrated)
Unlike Jesus, both were accepted as Prophets and statesmen

The phrase "I will put My words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him" is about a Prophet who would never judge or act according to his desire. The Quran too (53: 3-4) speaks of Mohammad as Allah's faithful mouthpiece.

Mohammad‘s advent was not only a fulfilment of the Bible‘s prophecy but also a confirmation of Hindu narrations predicting the coming of a final avatar i.e. savoir, a hero who will destroy evil and restore goodness to the world. In spite

of the fact that Hindu scriptures have undergone many distortions over the centuries and despite that many Hindu figures, such as Atal Bihari Bajipayee[1], were not convinced to call Hinduism a religion, several Hindu scholars believe that there is a striking correspondence between the Hindu accounts of a final avatar and the person of the Prophet Mohammad[2]. One prophecy is found in Bhavishya Puran, Prati Sarg Parv III: 3, 3, Mantra 5, where we read: —..A *malechha* (belonging to a foreign country and speaking a foreign language) spiritual teacher will appear with his companions. His name will be Mahamad...". Also in Sama Veda II: 6, Mantra 8: "Ahmad (another name for Mohammad) acquired religious law (Shariah) from his Lord. This religious law is full of wisdom. I receive light from him just as from the sun"[3].

A documented historical account corroborating Mohammad's prophethood is related by Imam Bukhari in his *Sahih*, the Correct Collection of Hadiths. This account is Emperor Heraclius' reply to Abu-Sufyan, an Arabian merchant who was summoned by Heraclius (a Byzantine emperor) to answer his questions about Prophet Mohammad. When Heraclius finished asking several questions, he commented on Abu-Sufyan's answers. Abu-Sufyan, the narrator of the face-to-face encounter with Heraclius thus reports:

"Heraclius asked the translator to convey to me the following, I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact all the Prophets come from noble families amongst their respective peoples. I questioned you whether anybody else amongst you claimed such a thing, your reply was in the negative. If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man

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(1) Prime minister of India for a record period of thirteen days.

(2) Fazlie, Murtahin B. (1997) *Hinduism and Islam: A Comparative Study*, Abul-Qasim Publishing House, Saudi Arabia.

(3) Haq, Z. (1997) The Last Prophet and the Quran in Revealed Scriptures @ <http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic/comparekjv.html>.

was following the previous man's statement. Then I asked you whether anyone of his ancestors was a king. Your reply was in the negative, and if it had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man wanted to regain his ancestors' kingdom.

I further asked whether he was ever accused of telling lies before he said what he said, and your reply was in the negative. So I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about Allah. I then asked you whether the rich people followed him or the poor. You replied that it was the poor who followed him. And in fact all Prophets have been followed by this very class of people. Then I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. You replied that they were increasing, and in fact this is the way of true faith, till it is complete in all respects. I further asked you whether there was anybody, who, after embracing his religion, became displeased and discarded his religion. Your reply was in the negative, and in fact this is (the sign of) true faith, when its delight enters the hearts and becomes deeply enmeshed in them. I asked you whether he had ever betrayed. You replied in the negative and likewise Prophets never betray. Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. You replied that he ordered you to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him and forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth and to be chaste. If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this place underneath my feet and I knew it (from the scriptures) that he was going to appear but I did not know that he would be from you, and if I could reach him, definitely, I would immediately set off to meet him and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet"[1].

Atheist Sam Harris, in the course of justifying his position as a disbeliever, stipulates that "if Jesus came saying things like: 'The Vatican Library has exactly thirty-seven thousand,

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[1] *Bukhari*: Vol. 1, p. 7; Ibn-Katheer Publishing House, 1987.

two hundred and twenty-six books' and he turned out to be right, we would then begin to feel that we were, at the very least, *in dialogue* with someone who had something to say about the way the world is"[1].

Now let us leave aside 'The Victorian Library' challenge and test the genuineness of Harris' latitude. What would be Harris' reaction if he learned that the Prophet Mohammad had many things to say about the way the world is? The evolution of the universe from a singularity (Quran: 21:30), the expansion of the universe (Quran: 51:47), the law of 'guidance' (Quran: 51:47) - a keyword in many of Darwin's writings[2], the fundamental concept of *Zouj* i.e. parity as a feature of matter and life (Quran: 36:36 & 51:49), the vital isostatic equilibrating function of mountains in stabilizing the curst of the earth (Quran: 78:6-7 & 16:15), the detailed accounts of microscopic key stages in embryological development (refer to chapter three), the aquatic partition separating seas with different water properties (Quran: 55:19-20; 25:53, and see diagram below), the vital intermediary function of *Yakhdoor* (in Arabic: 'green substance', recently known as Chlorophyll) in the production of fruits and seeds through photosynthesis (Quran: 6:99) [3], the startling precision of Mohammad's prophecy that the once barefooted bedouins of Arabia will compete in erecting tall buildings[4] (Riyadh and Dubai, a perfect microcosm!), or his other amazing prophecy that markets will become ever more closer[5] (consider

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[1] Harris, S. (2006) *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, Free Press, p. 77.

[2] For example see p. 57, 66, 104, and 122 in Darwin, C. (2004) *The Descent of Man*. Penguin Classics.

[3] I must note that modern translators of the Quran have failed to grasp the Arabic meaning of the word conveying this fact. Interestingly, several early scholars, such as the 9th century scholar Attabari, were precise in their description of *Khadhiran* (Quran: 6:99) as 'something green' (See Attabari, M. (2003) *Jami'al-Bayan*; Vol.9; p. 444).

[4] A Hadith narrated by *Muslim*: Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 111.

[5] *Ahmed*: No. 1036.

globalization and the often-quoted phrase "the world has become a small village"), in addition to many other signs attesting to the authenticity of the Quran and the truthfulness of the Prophet.

Now, is Harris *humble enough* to abide by his own criterion?

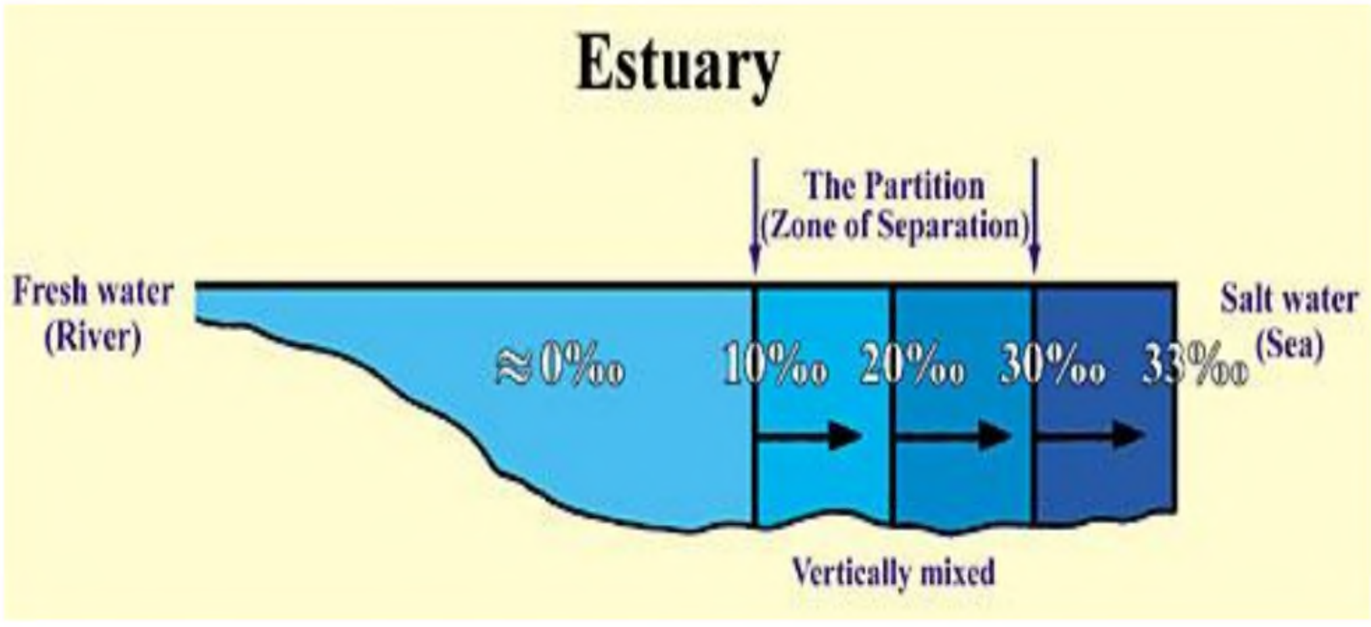

Diagram showing a succession of partitions depending on water properties from fresh water (left) to salt water (right) [1]

According to the Quran, Mohammad is the last of the Prophets and his message seals the message of all the Messengers who went before him:

> "But he (Mohammad) is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets"[2].

Today, after a lapse of fourteen centuries, the teachings of Mohammad continue to proliferate, ratifying the universal axiom that truth and only truth will live forever and will never relapse, retreat, or retire. Mohammad's entire lifestyle is exemplary. The ideal actions, sayings, and approvals of the

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[1] By courtesy of *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Islam,* originally from *Introductory Oceanography* by Thurman, H. & Trujillo, A., p. 300-301.
[2] Quran: 33: 40.

Prophet are known as the Sunnah, the second major source of Islamic legislation.

APPENDIX II

An Analysis of the Trinity Doctrine

> "To Jews and Muslims, however, the Trinity is not monotheistic. It reveals nothing about the true nature of God and is profoundly blasphemous".
>
> (Waugh, Alexander)[1]

The opening statement of the Nicene[2] Creed declares:

"We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father"[3].

Christians adhering to the Trinity doctrine speak of a God who is three in one and one in three. In terms of 'cardinality'[4], three quantities necessitate a multiple existence. It simply means plurality. But how do believers in the Trinity justify this plurality so that it does not infract the essence of unity?

First of all, one would have to violate simple logic in order to assert that 1=3 and 3=1 are rationally plausible. This can only be right if we subtract 2 from three or add (-2) to the

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(1) Waugh, Alexander (2003) *God*. Review, p. 202.

(2) Beware that the Nicene Creed was neither preached by Jesus nor any of his close disciples. It was imposed by Emperor Constantine and his assembly of Athanasian bishops about three centuries after Jesus had been raised to God. Athanasius, known in Christendom for introducing the Trinity dogma, was fiercely opposed by Arius who strongly rejected the divinity of Jesus and believed in the oneness of God. The great bickering between both camps resulted in Arius' banishment and the inauguration of the triune Godhead.

(3) *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, John Bowker, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 696.

(4) In mathematics, cardinal numbers are discrete quantities such as one, two, three…etc.

three[1]. In both cases the result is number ~~–o~~ne". This is in terms of quantity (i.e. cardinality). But Christian Trinitarians argue that this is not what they mean. Rather, they advance the claim that the ~~–th~~ree" are ~~–o~~ne" in terms of *quality* yet remain separate in terms of quantity. But simple logic falsifies this immediately because, linguistically speaking, if we say that three *different* nouns with three distinct meanings[2] refer to the one and same referent, then this is a palpable illogicality. Please allow me to demonstrate where the illogicality comes from.

Let us assume that we have three different nouns and suppose that they are related in some manner to abide by the *begotten-and-proceed* definition of Trinity. One noun is ~~–X~~", the other is ~~–Y~~" and the third is ~~–Z~~". Trinitarians maintain that the Father begot the Son while the Holy Spirit has proceeded from the Father. By analogy, just assuming that ~~–X~~" gave rise to ~~–Y~~" and that ~~–Z~~" proceeded from ~~–X~~" does not necessarily mean that they are qualitatively equal[3].

Logical maxims state that three non-synonymous nouns can only refer to three different entities. This conclusion proceeds from apodictic knowledge. Furthermore, the maxims hold that we cannot ascribe three different ~~–n~~ouns" to the same entity unless they are **synonymous**[4] and/or **non-gradable**[5] among themselves. But in the case of the Trinity, one cannot help having second thoughts about its tenability. Why?

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[1] …provided that no essence of God can be "minus".
[2] The Godhead comprises three different nouns: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
[3] From another perspective, even the characters "X", "Y" and "Z" are phonetically 'different' sounds.
[4] **"Synonymous":** we cannot say that 'sister' may refer to a male relative (brother) although they are members of the same family.
[5] **"Non-gradable":** if something is qualified as 'one', can it be greater and smaller than itself?

Answer: because, as mentioned in the Bible, the Father is *greater* than the Son[1]. Here the ―non-gradability" maxim is violated. Moreover, if we say that the nouns ―Son", ―Holy Spirit", and ―Father" refer to one and the same thing, synonymous that is, then this is another problem: the ―synonymity" maxim is violated. Violating these semantic maxims entails two things; either:

1) The proposition is absurd by means of reductio ad absurdum[2], hence the implausibility of the argument.

Or,

2) The entity in question must be comprised of discrete existential entities.

If the case is the latter, then it must not apply to our definition of God. Why?

Because it simply means that the existence of the Godhead is **conditional** upon the existence of all three. A sense of **interdependence** among the three is needed to induce a conceptual existence of the Godhead in our minds, not to say out there in reality. As we all know, **dependence** and **conditionality** must not characterize God's existence, lest they should imply need. Only created entities need the interdependence and interplay of their structures and inner components to survive or, in the case of inanimate entities, maintain their existence[3]. Again, if one is to arbitrarily deny

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(1) "…my Father is **greater** than I" (John 14:28).

(2) In logic this means the act of disproving a proposition by showing an absurdity to which it leads when carried to its logical conclusion. (*Merriam-Webster's*, 2003)

(3) For example, the distribution and interaction of atoms within us are necessary to maintain our existence. Our existence is dependent on this interdependence among different particles. Nonetheless, several writers - such as Chalmers MacCormick and others – explain away the problem by claiming that "although the Father and Son are of one substance, there are two respects in which the Father has a priority over the Son. In the first place, He enjoys a priority of order in

interdependence and assert that the Godhead is one single thing, then one would necessarily violate another maxim, the **discreteness** maxim. This means that one would have to maintain that God is a collective name, subsuming three distinct persons or, in other words, three self-sufficient, independent gods. In effect, we have polytheism. May be Christians are now in a better position to understand the words of James H. Leuba when he wrote:

"The average Christian, whatever he may say to the contrary, is, theoretically speaking, a materialist, and, I might add, a polytheist"[1].

In order to solve this problem[2], some Christians resort to the problematic analogy of matter, time, and space. They say that each of the three is comprised of three components. Respectively, **matter**: gas, solid, and liquid; **time**: past, present, and future; and **space**: height, width, and depth. This analogy is even more mystifying. Again why?

Because, in the case of time for example, no point in time can be past, present, and future at the same moment. In the case of space, dimensions refer to different things. In the case of matter, nothing physical can assume a liquid, solid, and gaseous existence at the same time. A glass of water in your

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eternity, in that He preceded the Son in eternity". (See MacCormick, Chalmers (1963) The "Antitrinitarianism" of John Campanus. *Church History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep), p.281). Again this is a contradictory explanation because it assumes that some part of God is not eternal. How could Son and Father be of the same eternal substance yet the Father is more eternal than the Son? Is it logical in first place to say that something is *more eternal* than something else? We all know that eternity is an absolute quality not a relative one.

(1) Leuba, James H. (1909) *The Psychological Origin and Nature of Religion*, London, p. 24.

(2) The Trinity doctrine conflicted with both reality and the dictates of reason and many have written to solve this problem. John Polkinghorne, an ordained Anglican priest and Professor of Mathematical Physics, had to author *Science and the Trinity: the Christian Encounter with Reality*. Works down this road, however, have only obscured the wearisome concept and never solved the problem.

hand can only be one of the three, but not all three at the same time. It cannot be steam, ice, and drinkable water at the same time. The same applies to time. Time or a specific moment in time cannot be past, present, and future at that one given moment. The concept of space is an exception. Not because its three elements can be maintained at the same time, but because God must not be described in terms of width, length and height, as we do when speaking of physically measurable/quantifiable entities. God created dimensions and measurements for our convenience, to help us understand and conceive existence. God is absolute and limitless, unrestricted by the boundaries of space and time. Drawing analogies between the finite and The Infinite raises more problems than it solves.

Assuming, for the sake of discussion, that all of the three components for time, space, and matter can exist at the same time, one inevitably faces the same problem. Again, it is the problem of **interdependence** and **conditionality**: the concept of **time** cannot exist without past, present and future; the concept of **space** cannot exist without length, width, and height; the concept of **matter** cannot exist without liquid, solid, and gas. These restrictions should not apply to God whose existence is neither ~~–c~~onditional" nor ~~–d~~ependent" on anything. He is free of all needs, absolute, eternal, and unsurpassable in power, knowledge, mercy, and wisdom. In short, there are no conditions whatsoever in which God cannot exist without, because He necessarily exists by himself.

This is why God is One and only One. In terms of *ordinality*[1], is not number one the first? Just think about this wonderful number. It connotes uniqueness, singularity, unity, independence, wholesomeness, integrality, and precedence. If you multiply number one by itself ad infinitum or divide it by

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[1] In elementary mathematics, an 'ordinal' number is one of the numbers such as first, second, third etc, which show the order of things.

itself ad infinitum you will only get one result and that is number one. If you try to divide one by any other number you will break it! Even if you divide it by minus one (-1) the 'absolute value' is still number one. It follows that ultimate truth can only be one and that all people should be united as if one body and worship the One true God.

> "Truly! This is your religion, one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"[1].

This is the God which Muslims worship. In Arabic, they call Him –Allah". It is He who has chosen this name, Allah, meaning the One to be worshipped and yearned for. Allah has called the ones who submit themselves to His will Muslims, meaning the ones who refuse to submit to anything except Allah:

Allah has identified Himself in many verses. One of them reads:

> "It is He Allah, besides whom there is no other god; The Sovereign, The Holy One, The Peaceful and Perfect, The Guarantor, The Guardian, The Almighty, The Powerful, The Tremendous: Glory to Allah! Far is He from the partners they set up with Him! He is Allah, The Creator, The Evolver, The Fashioner of Forms. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names: whatever is in the heavens and in the earth glorifies Him; and He is The Almighty, The Wise"[2].

Another verse establishes the logic of *tawheed*:

> "No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (otherwise), behold, each god would have seized what he had created, and they would have

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[1] Quran: 21:92.
[2] Quran: 59: 23-24.

dominated one another! Glory to Allah! Far is He from what they ascribe to Him!"[1].

There are several Biblical verses where Jesus is emphatic about his human nature. He calls himself "the son of man" (Mark: 2:10, 27-28; Matthew: 12:31, 13:41; 25:31-32). Such unequivocal statements provoke two conclusions. First, whether 'man' is used literally or figuratively, in both cases God is not a man. Second: the word "Father" must have been used figuratively to refer to a God who loves and cherishes his people. These are fatherly qualities but God is not a father in the literal sense. From another perspective, the literal sense of the word is neutralized by Jesus telling his addressees that their Father is in heaven. In Matthew (23:8-9) Jesus is reported to have said: "Do not call any man on earth father for *you have one Father*, and he is in heaven". Moreover, the word Father is a translation of the Aramaic word *Abba*. According to the Bible index of the NIV, 'Abba' is a child's familiar name for 'father', used by Jesus and Christians alike when addressing God in their prayers.

Even the phrase "Son of God" is not unique to Jesus alone. Several men were also called the sons of God including Adam (Luke 3:38) Abraham (Jeremy 31:9), Jacob (Exod. 4:22), David (IISAM. 7:14), Solomon (I Chron. 22:10). In fact, several Prophets (e.g. Abraham, Jacob, David) were even described as God's ~~"~~first born" (Psalms. 2:7). Such phrases are not used to express lineage and a thought like this must not occur to a mind well-acquainted with God's Attributes. Rather, such phrases are figurative references to ties of love between God and his Prophets or obedient people. In summary, who was Jesus and what was his mission? Armstrong's vast experience in Judeo-Christian history led her to the conclusion that:

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[1] Quran: 91: 23.

"Jesus was not asking the people to believe in his divinity, because he was making no such claim. He was asking for commitment. He wanted disciples who would engage with his mission[1], give all they had to the poor, feed the hungry, refuse to be hampered by family ties, abandon their pride, lay aside their self-importance and sense of entitlement, live like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and trust God who was their faith"[2].

As shown earlier, the Judaeo-Christian sources have suffered considerable adulterations and we have seen how numerous leading Biblical scholars have laid bare the truth about the Bible's authenticity. The impact of such distortions has been enormous and continues to shape the religious worldview of many generations.

> "They have disbelieved those who said: Allah the third of three: for there is no god except One God"[3].

We conclude this analysis with Thomas Paine who sensibly notes:

—The notion of a Trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as anything is divided it is weakened"[4].

And Dr. Gradiner Spring who, in his *Glory of Christ*, only reaffirms the Islamic understanding of God:

"The first and most prominent thought, connected with the great word "God," is that he possesses existence which is underived and eternal. This is what natural and revealed

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[1] Hence in the Quran we read, "*O you who believe! Be helpers (in the cause) of Allah just as Jesus, son Mary, said unto to the disciples: "Who are my helpers (in the cause) of Allah?*" (Quran: 61:14).
[2] Armstrong, Karen (2009) *The Case for God*, p. 90.
[3] Quran: 5:73.
[4] Paine, Thomas (1984) *The Age of Reason*, Prometheus Books, p. 184.

religion mean by God. The idea of an eternal, independent Being is the most exalted conception the human mind *can* receive of the all-perfect Deity. He is one who exists prior to every other being, and derives his *existence* from no other. He is self-existent, and has the principle of life in Himself"[1].

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[1] Wilson, Join (1864) *Unitarian Principles Confirmed by Trinitarian Testimonies*: *Being Selections from the Works of Eminent Theologians Belonging to Orthodox Churches*, Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, p. 383.

APPENDIX III

A Very Short Critique of David Hume's Argument and Demonstrating the Plausibility of Arguing for Theism/Design from Human Experience

The cosmological argument advanced by Samuel Clarke, Newton's follower, is one of the strongest arguments for God's existence[1]. His argument is a slight variant of the Islamic Kalam argument developed by Islamic scholars centuries earlier. Clarke maintains that, logically, God can still exist even if there were infinite successions of contingent beings. In this sense, Clarke's argument is almost analogous to Ibn-Taimiyyah's (1263–1328 AD) view of Allah as eternally creative (cf. 'Allah: Eternally Creative' in this book).

But some contemporary critics (Gale: 2007) claim that David Hume "raised what is considered by many to be a decisive objection to Clarke‘s argument"[2]. David Hume claimed that infinitely successive contingent beings casually explain themselves and therefore do not need to be explained by an external agent, which is in this case God. But Hume's argument is both extremely feeble and hugely impoverished and I do not understand how it has come to be hailed as "a decisive objection".

Hume fails to explain the condition of contingent beings in relation to one another and not only in relation to their immediate successive beings which are their linear effects. In other words, Hume fails to explain the non-linear organized coordination of contingent beings in relation to one another

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(1) Gale, R. M. (2007) The Failure of Classical Theistic Arguments. In *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, Cambridge University Press, p. 94-95.
(2) *Ibid*.

through time and space. The parts of an automobile may naively and simplistically be explained in terms of their linear causal effect but how did each part fall into the right place with respect to its neighboring parts? This necessarily implies the precedence of an intelligent premeditated blueprint.

Infinity is not an entity in eternal competition with the Creator; it's a quality proceeding from Allah's eternal creative activity. The problem arises when we think of a God who has been eternally idle and then decides, for an unknown reason, to break eternal silence with a Big Bang. This naïve notion finds no place in the Quran. Allah, described as the One who continuously creates i.e. Al-Khallaaq (Quran: 15:86.), has always been creating worlds after worlds in endless cycles of creation. So even if one were to postulate the seemingly insolvable problem of infinite regression, this would only hold in the case of *particular* successions of created beings (our cosmos, the solar system, earth, trees, people, etc) which will also perish (Quran: 28:88) in the never-ending waves of creative activity.

I should also seize this opportunity to add that all atheistic arguments, without exception, acquire most of their explanative power from human experience. Such recourse to human experience, which is unavoidable, immediately contravenes the epistemological tenets atheistic philosophers have set up for themselves and this is because arguments for design/theism also obtain, and with robust effectivity, their epistemic legitimacy from human experience. **When it comes to this measure**, the dictates of human experience are far more facilitative to arguments from design and far more in favour of arguments for theism.

We can only judge from the dictates of human experience. A judgment which is consonant with the dictates of experience is, as far as humans are concerned, rationally justified. One judgment which is consonant with human experience is that instances of design, order, and uniformity point to a designer

or intelligent agent. The universe abounds in instances of design, order, and uniformity, so it is consonant with the dictates of human experience to assume that an intelligent being exists. Hence, the Creator's existence is rationally justified.

Only if we are prepared to discredit knowledge from human experience as unreliable can we be justified in seeking explanations of a different order, external validations for example. Since it is impossible to think outside our own experience, for the components of our experience are themselves the building blocks of the body of knowledge we possess, then external validations will also be meaningless unless they conform to the dictates of human experience. Only in this case will it be meaningful to us.

Allah, as numerously stated throughout the Quran, directs us to observe and contemplate signs which are always *experience-friendly* so that all sane persons, at all times and places, may easily acknowledge his existence. The earliest man in history (sometimes called the 'savage') and the great thinkers of the twenty first century are on par with each other in this respect. In Islam, people are not encouraged to think of Allah through formalistic modes of reasoning (e.g. Aristotelian logic). His existence is effortlessly acknowledged by *Fitrah*, the pristine self inside every person.

> "Do they not look at the camels, how they were created? And at the heaven, how it was raised? And at the mountains, how they were set up? And at the earth, how it was outspread? So remind them (O Mohammad), for you are only a reminder"[(1)].

[(1)] Quran: 88: 17-21.

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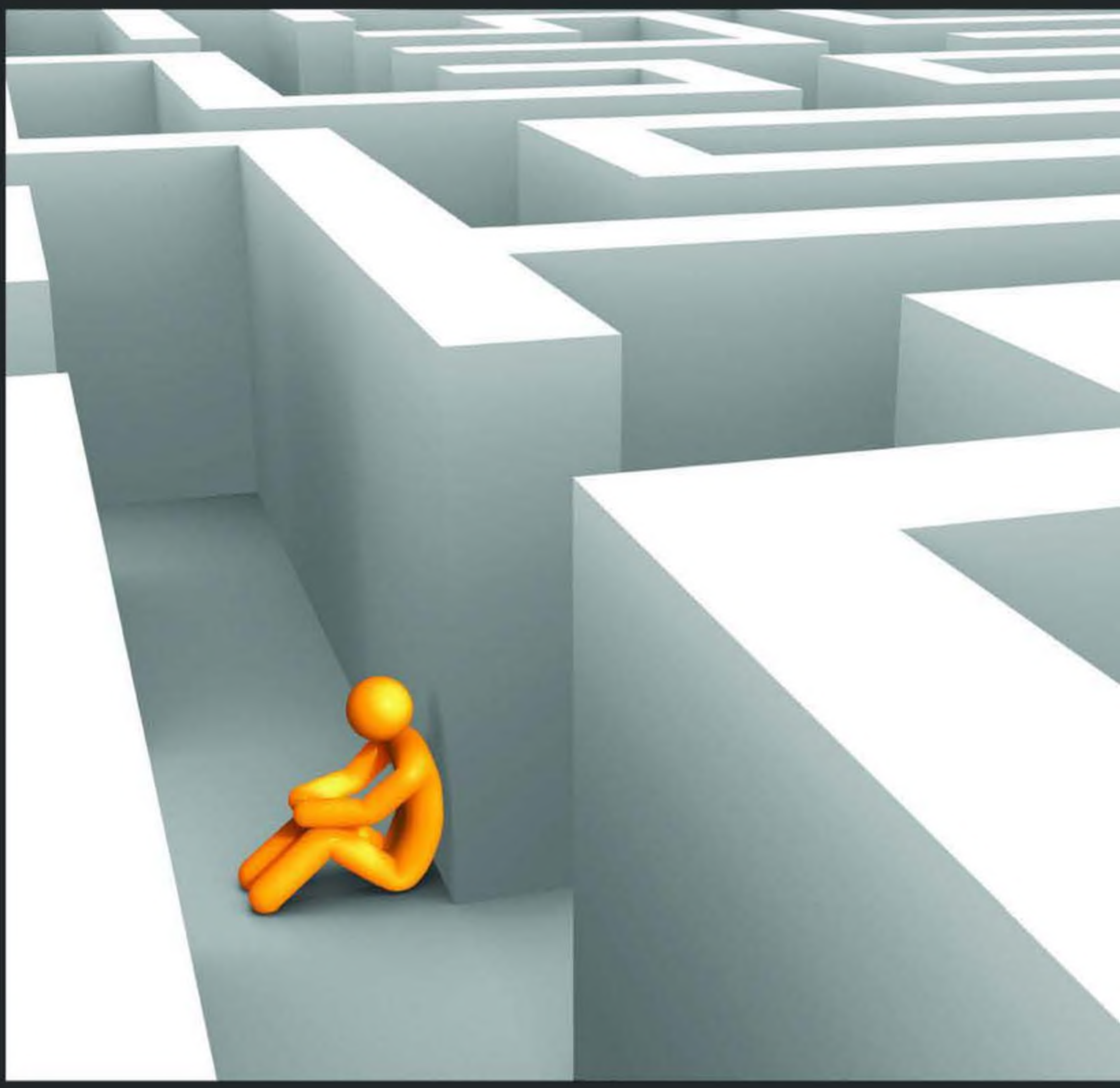

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